

**TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY:
CONTEMPORARY PREACHING
OF BIBLICAL HEALING**

A Professional Project
Presented to
The Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Christopher Scott Langton
May 1987

This professional project, completed by

Christopher Scott Langton,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Cornisa R. Rogers
Vincent J. Wimbush

April 15, 1987

Date

Allen J. Moore
Dean

© 1987

Christopher Scott Langton

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Abstract

To Proclaim Liberty: Contemporary Preaching of Biblical Healing

Christopher Scott Langton

As homiletical material the healings in the Bible have been largely abused or ignored for centuries. And yet spiritual healing, as a part of Christian experience and of the task of the Church, is an integral part of the biblical tradition upon which the Church bases its faith, and has experienced a grass-roots renaissance in many churches in the last two decades. This study examines the healing traditions of the Bible and their value for contemporary preaching, using the insights of historical and biblical criticism, theological reflection, homiletics and hermeneutics.

An exploration in Chapter 2 of the religious environment in which biblical healing emerged and of the place of healing in the early Church's proclamation points to an ambivalent attitude towards Christian healing and a decline in its practice in the Church, along with a parallel debility in homiletical endeavor from around the time of Augustine of Hippo. The gradual loss of spiritual vitality within the Church, following its establishment by Constantine as an accepted institution within the Roman Empire, is suggested as a major cause for these parallel phenomena.

A theological, biblical and pastoral link between preaching and healing in their concern for salvation is developed in Chapter 3, and the historic disintegration of this link and of concern with healing as a function of the Church is traced in the context of shifting attitudes towards the Bible. The renewal of Christian healing in

recent years as an accepted practice within the broader Church is sketched within the framework of effort to renew biblical preaching, pointing to a need to reconsider contemporary hermeneutical approaches to the Bible. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to overviews of healing in the Old and New Testaments, followed by exegeses of specific biblical healing texts (2 Kings 5 and Luke 7:1-10). In the concluding chapter a new and more open hermeneutical approach to the biblical healings is called for, and sample sermons are given based on such an approach and on the exegetical work in the previous chapters.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Preaching and Healing in the Church's Infancy.....	10
Setting for Proclamation: Healing and Religion in the Hellenistic World.....	10
Apostolic Antecedents: First Century Christianity.....	12
An Age of Argument and Advance: The Apologists.....	18
The Ambivalent Era of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries.....	27
Epilogue: After Augustine.....	33
3. Preaching and Healing: Theological Unity and Historical Disintegration.....	36
Theological Unity: Healing.....	36
Theological Unity: Preaching.....	40
Historical Disintegration.....	42
Healing the Rift.....	52
4. Healing and the Old Testament.....	57
An Overview.....	57
An Exegesis of Old Testament Healing: 2 Kings 5.....	61
The Text: Limits of the Unit.....	62
The Text: Problems and Variations.....	63
Genre and Style.....	66
Structure.....	67
Setting.....	70
Issues and Theology.....	73

Chapter	Page
Interpretation and Homiletical Possibilities.....	76
5. Healing and the New Testament.....	80
Overview and Old Testament Connections.....	80
An Exegesis of New Testament Healing: Luke 7:1-10.....	86
The Text: Limits of the Unit.....	88
The Text: Problems and Variations.....	89
Form and Style.....	90
Structure.....	93
Setting and Issues.....	95
Interpretation and Homiletical Possibilities.....	101
6. Appropriating and Proclaiming Biblical Reality.....	107
Liturgy for Sermon 1.....	115
Sermon 1: Healing: Recovery and Renewal.....	116
Liturgy for Sermon 2.....	124
Sermon 2: Healing: Divine Grace, not Human Faith!.....	125
Bibliography.....	132

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the secularized society of contemporary America the practice referred to variously as "faith healing", "spiritual healing", "divine healing", or "Christian healing" is generally regarded with at least some suspicion, if not all-out disdain. This approach to health and healing is not a familiar one in modern life, which Pope John Paul II has said embraces an "ideology of technology, which imposed the primacy of matter over spirit, of the technical over the moral."¹ Consequently many people simply do not normally think in terms of spiritual power as efficacious in everyday human affairs. When they do, often they think of such healing activity as a fraud for economic gain, a myth accepted only by fundamental biblical literalists, a mysterious practice of quasi-Christian fringe groups, or else at best as a divine modus operandi of antiquity when such a special dispensation was necessary due to the primitive state of medical knowledge and the need to increase the infant Church.

Unfortunately, even in the Church, Christian healing has suffered from the same misconceptions held by our secular, technologically-oriented society about healing, miracles, and matters of the spirit in general. It would seem that in the Church, if anywhere, the concept of Christian healing would have a fair hearing. However, throughout most of our history, Christian healing has had a hard time getting any kind of hearing at all in the Church, even at

¹ "Pope Says Labor Takes Priority over Capital," San Diego Union, 30 Jan. 1985, sec. A: 2.

the most scholarly level:

. . . most Christian thinking, both Catholic and Protestant, has been swept clean of any idea of Christian healing....

The most comprehensive survey of recent theology, John Macquarrie's Twentieth Century Religious Thought, makes this quite clear. Healing is simply overlooked today. Of the 150 theologians discussed in that book, not one emphasizes the effect of man's religious life on his mental and physical health Our culture has no place for such experiences.²

This theological silence has carried over into the pulpit. In the face of our modern mind-set, which like the disciple Thomas seems to be concerned more with empirical data than with spiritual modalities, contemporary preachers in general avoid the topic of spiritual healing as a present possibility, just as they avoid the matter of miracles as a whole.³

And yet spiritual healing, as a part of the total Christian experience and the task of Christ's Church, is an integral part of the biblical tradition upon which the Church bases its faith. In the Old Testament, healings abound, and healing and miracle-working are regarded as essential to the life of a prophet, and are an indication of his divine calling.⁴ In the New Testament, 40 percent of the

2 Morton T. Kelsey, Healing and Christianity (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 30, 307.

3 Dwight E. Stevenson, In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop (Nashville: Abindgon Press, 1967), 58-59

4 J. Lindholm, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 50-51, 201-202

narrative in Matthew and Mark, 35 percent of Luke's narrative and 33 percent of John's deal with Jesus' healing activity and that of his disciples.⁵ In fact, Jesus' entire ministry may be described as a threefold interrelated ministry of preaching, teaching and healing:

The healings of Jesus, far from conflicting with his preaching of the kingdom of God, were instead referred to as a direct evidence of it . . . He stated specifically that his healing was a sign that the kingdom of heaven was breaking forth.⁶

Thus, as will be explored in this study, in the New Testament the healings of Jesus and his followers have of themselves a proclamatory function.

In addition, 16 physical healings are recorded in Acts, and reference is made in Paul's writings and the later New Testament documents also to healing as part of the Church's ministry.⁷ Beyond the biblical material, the writings of the early Church Fathers indicate that healing continued to be an integral part of the ministry of the Church for at least 300 years after Jesus.⁸ In light of this, the contemporary reluctance to deal homiletically in a serious and careful way with spiritual healing as a part of Christian experience is baffling.

⁵ John Wilkinson, Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1980), 19.

⁶ Kelsey, 53, 58; cf. Matt. 12:22-28, Luke 7:20-22 and 11:14-20.

⁷ Bernard Martin, The Healing Ministry of the Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 31.

⁸ Kelsey, 133.

In fairness it should be noted that a religious renaissance of sorts with regard to Christian healing has begun to take place at the grass-roots level of the Church in the last couple of decades in the United States and Europe. With the interdenominational growth of the Charismatic movement, the rise of Pentecostalism and conservative approaches to biblical Christian faith, the appearance of a variety of healing ministers and ministries, and the growing concern over pastoral counseling and ministry to the "whole" individual, interest in and the practice of Christian healing have gained increased attention throughout the Church. What was once skeptically viewed as only an unusual practice of such contemporary smaller denominations as Christian Science is now becoming a topic of renewed concern for the Church as a whole. While it can be fairly asserted that Mary Baker Eddy and the Church she founded have played a leading (and frequently unappreciated) role in the preservation and development of the organized practice of Christian healing in the last two centuries, nevertheless a specific exploration of the position and contribution of Christian Science regarding Christian healing is outside the scope of this study.⁹ It still seems, however, that in general the preaching and leadership of the Church have not caught up with this grass-roots movement, nor taken serious account of this renewed area of the life of the Church.

This study will endeavour to address that deficiency, and to examine the healing traditions found in the Bible with an eye towards

⁹ Such exploration has been undertaken in Robert Peel, Christian Science: Its Encounter with American Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958), and in Stephen Gottschalk, The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

their value as preaching material. It seeks to examine the biblical and historical basis for Christian concern with spiritual healing, and to point to the critical importance of such healing as a homiletical as well as a pastoral concern for the contemporary Church. It seeks an answer to the question: In a world where science, technology and materialism are the sovereign trinity, is there room for a Christian proclamation that includes healing as anything but symbolic or metaphorical? Is there a place in today's world for the preaching of healing and regeneration by spiritual power, for the gospel message of healing as it is perceived in the Bible?

In approaching the biblical material the focus will be upon the healing narratives specifically rather than the vast collection of overall miracle material in Scripture. The healing traditions are a part of this miracle tradition, and are illustrative of the way in which miracle functions in the Bible, but a consideration of the entire miracle tradition (or the history of thought about miracle in general) is beyond the scope of this study. Miracle may enter into the discussion at some point, but only as it relates to the specific intent and function of the healing narratives, and not vice versa.

In a project of this size, even the entirety of the biblical healing material is too much to consider. However, for homiletical purposes it is important that both Old and New Testaments be given consideration. Therefore representative material from both the Old and New Testaments will be examined and offered as a model for treatment of other healing texts in the Bible. Use of the biblical material in the early Church in defining the church's mission will also be discussed.

The intent in undertaking such a study is to apply the resources of biblical scholarship to the homiletical task in exploring a

long-neglected area of Christian experience which is the focus of renewed interest in Church circles today. It is an area which has profound implications for human self-understanding and for every facet of the helping and people-oriented professions within and without the Church. It is undertaken on the assumption that "every parish minister is the biblical scholar of his congregation, as he is the theologian, the preacher, and the pastor of that congregation".¹⁰ Therefore the minister's homiletical endeavors should be girded not only by sound homiletical and hermeneutical principles, but also by careful exegetical practices and serious biblical scholarship.

The method used in this project will be primarily library research, coupled with theological and scholarly reflection. The methodology is primarily one of synthesis, attempting to draw together insights from theology, history, biblical criticism, and pastoral and homiletical resources into a cohesive picture of the historic and potential relation of healing and preaching. The exegetical approach to the biblical material will be primarily historical and theological rather than strictly form-critical or structural, although insights from these approaches will also be considered when deemed appropriate. The thrust of this approach will be to determine the meaning, intent and function of the healing narratives in their original setting and to their original audiences, and to derive from this the meanings and values for the contemporary Christian community and its proclamation of the gospel.

¹⁰ Stevenson, 58.

The central thesis and underlying assumption of this study is that within Christian ministry the preaching of the gospel and the healing of human ills through spiritual power are inextricably linked together as means of proclaiming and demonstrating the good news of salvation, and that there is evidence in the history and theology of the Church which clearly points to such a conclusion, as well as in the canonical writings. This link between preaching and healing takes on increased significance in light of current renewed emphasis on the centrality of preaching as a ministerial function, and in light of the effort to examine other ministerial activities, notably pastoral counseling, in relation to preaching.¹¹

No attempt is made in this study to hazard a complete definition or theology of preaching, healing, or the concept of salvation. These terms are used generally in the broadest sense possible in a Christian context. This stated, it should be noted that the term healing is used in a wider sense than is normally found in works on psychology or pastoral counseling, where it usually connotes an exclusively psychological, emotional or relational phenomenon, and may or may not involve spiritual or divine activity. In this study, healing is conceived of as any transforming and reforming experience, whether spiritual, physical, moral, emotional, psychological, relational, or in any other sense existential, in which the transformation is perceived to occur solely as a result of divine power. Thus healing, in its broadest and truest sense, must address sin, sickness of mind and body, and all the brokenness, disease and estrangement of human

¹¹ For example, Donald Capps, Pastoral Counseling and Preaching: A Quest for an Integrated Ministry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980).

experience on both an individual and a communal level. In general, however, the emphasis in the study will be on bodily healing, since that is the one area so frequently avoided and misunderstood in considerations of Christian healing.

It should be noted also that preaching as used here refers to all the apologetic and proclamatory avenues of the Church, and includes written and didactic efforts as well as kerygmatic ones; but the main focus is on homiletics in a worship context. This may be a bit broader than the common conception, but any communication effort in any form that has as its intent broadcasting the good news of Christ's message of salvation ought to be viewed as in some sense to be preaching the gospel. Within this conceptual framework, as this study will indicate, healing can be preaching and preaching can be healing.

The study is in five sections:

1. A chapter exploring the religious environment in which the biblical healing material emerged, and how it was used in the proclamation of the early Church. The decline of healing as a vital pastoral practice and homiletical concern will also be examined.

2. A chapter exploring the theological unity between preaching and healing, and sketching the historical disintegration of this relationship, as well as pointing to signs that a reconstruction is necessary, and may be underway at present.

3. A chapter exploring the place of healing in the Old Testament and suggesting possible direction for its homiletical use. Exegesis of a representative healing passage will be included.

4. A chapter exploring the place of healing in the New Testament and suggesting possible directions for its homiletical use. Relation of the Old Testament healing traditions to the New Testament will also

be explored, and exegesis of a representative New Testament healing passage will be included.

5. A summary chapter drawing implications of this study together regarding the pastoral and homiletic possibilities of Christian healing and its place in the ministry of the contemporary Church. Sample sermons from the exegetical work in the two previous sections will be included with suggested liturgical contexts.

One historian at least has seen a bright promise for our era based on the Church's potential to heal in Christ's name:

At present, many observers note evidences of the gathering mental darkness of a civilization making matter its god and hope. But if Christian healing is not merely revived but fully restored, future ages may not see our era as one of incipient darkness after all. They may view it as a spiritually decisive period in which Christians actively began to reverse the negation¹² of divine power which has prevailed in the modern epoch.

But to see where the practice and proclamation of Christian healing may lead, first requires an examination of its roots.

12 Stephen Gottschalk "Christian Healing: The Christian Science View," Christian Science Monitor, 19 March 1979; 17.

CHAPTER 2

Preaching and Healing in the Church's Infancy

Setting for Proclamation:Healing and Religion inthe Hellenistic World

It has been generally accepted that during the first three centuries of the Church's life, physical healing by spiritual means was a normal and expected facet of Christian practice.¹ It was, in fact, as integral a part of the Church's ministry as preaching, teaching and administering the sacraments, and played an important role in the missionary work and propaganda of the Church from its beginning.² The New Testament documents and the writings of the Church Fathers bear this out, and show that the cure of physical and mental ills by spiritual means had a place not only in the practice but also in the proclamation and defense of the new religion. Healing was a theme in the vocabulary, rationale and life of the Church in its beginning much more so than is the case today.

However, while Christianity may have been particularly successful in this regard, it was by no means unique in the Hellenistic world as a religion in which healing played a part.³ Religion was but the chief of three recognized approaches to healing in the ancient world.

1 Pierson Parker, "Early Christianity as a Religion of Healing," St. Luke's Journal of Theology 19 (1976): 142, 149.

2 George G. Dawson, Healing: Pagan and Christian (London: SPCK, 1935), 146, 159.

3 One indicator of early Christian success in the area of healing as compared to other religious groups may be seen in the first-century Talmudic prohibitions against Jews resorting to Christians for healing, even though relief from suffering may result from such resort; for a discussion of the evidence, see Parker, pp. 144-145.

The first two were medical approaches, one practical and conservative, the other hypothetical and experimental; but as Shirley Jackson points out:

The third school, and by far the most universally popular, was the religious. By the great majority of people religion was thought to offer the only sure remedy for the ills to which flesh is heir. Fundamental to the religious school is the notion that healing ultimately comes from the deity . . . Therapeutic activity covers both mental and bodily ailments, each being ultimately relieved through the medium of the psychic rather than the physical forces.⁴

Evidently any religion worth its salt in the turbulent Hellenistic world into which Christianity emerged included some element of healing. S.V. McCasland concludes that religious healing was an important function in first-century Palestine (a cultural and religious cross-road in the ancient world) for Judaism, Greco-Roman and Phoenician cults, and in emerging Christianity. Religious healing practices involved amulets, charms, incantations, exorcism, sacred springs and sites, prayer, piety and the names of angels and deities.⁵ Inscriptions at the temples and shrines of the Greek gods Aesculapius and Pan, the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis, and the surviving accounts of cures by Jewish and pagan exorcists, healers and

4 Shirley Jackson Case, "The Art of Healing in Early Christian Times," Journal of Religion 3 (1923): 247.

5 S.V. McCasland, "Religious Healing in First-Century Palestine," Environmental Factors in Christian History, eds J.T. McNeill, M. Spinka and H.R. Willoughby. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 34. Judaic interest in healing is indicated in Ex. 15:26; Num. 12:1-15; I Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 5:1-15; 2 Chron. 16:12-14; Pss. 6:2; 30:2,3; 103:2-4; 107:20; Jer. 17:14.

heroes, all indicate how widespread and important this practice of religious healing was in the Hellenistic world.⁶

This notion of religious healing was linked to the then-widespread belief in demons and evil spiritual forces, and the power they exercised in the world. Demons and evil spirits were held responsible for innumerable mental, emotional and physical disorders as well as other misfortunes and calamities, so that exorcism was considered to be part of the phenomena of religious healing in Jewish, Christian and pagan circles.⁷

Thus as Christianity emerged as a new religious thrust in the Hellenistic world, it found an existing necessity to address one of the most insistent demands within the life of the Greco-Roman world. In an environment where a universally expected function of religion was to heal disease, it is not surprising therefore that Christianity was from its inception a healing religion, and that healing became an integral factor in the practice and proclamation of the Church.

Apostolic Antecedents:

First Century Christianity

The earliest Christian documents preserved in the New Testament indicate that healing was a part of the original Christian message to the world. Paul's letters to the churches, which in a sense may be considered exhortatory sermons, show clearly the function of healing in early Christian rhetoric and experience.⁸ In his letter

6 McCasland, 23-33.

7 McCasland, 21-26.

upbraiding the Galatians, Paul makes reference to miracles experienced in the Christian community there as an argument for the authority of the gospel he preached to them (Gal. 3:5). In a moving section at the end of 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his own authenticity as a true apostle of the Lord, and defines in part the apostolic ministry:

The things that mark an apostle - signs, wonders and miracles
- were done among you with great perseverance.
(2 Cor. 12:12, NIV)

In a letter to the Romans, Paul speaks again of the place of miracles and signs of power in his ministry and of their role in his evangelizing ministry:

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done - by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.
(Rom. 15:18-19, NIV)

Although none of these verses mentions healing specifically, it is clear that, as Kelsey has noted, healing is included among the "signs, wonders, miracles and mighty works" which Paul refers to as characterizing a divinely commissioned apostolic ministry.⁹

Paul talks specifically of the ministry of healing as an accepted

⁸ DeWitte T. Holland, The Preaching Tradition: A Brief History (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 19.

⁹ Kelsey, 105.

practice of the Church in the first letter to the Corinthians (12:9,28,30), where he gives it a high priority among the functions of the Church. Thus, within the first 30 years of the Church's life, healing had apparently become an important Christian vocation, and an expected activity for apostles entrusted with the proclamation of the gospel. By the close of the first century, or perhaps the beginning of the second, healing had become somewhat more institutionalized within the structure of church activities, and served an internal pastoral role as well as the original evangelical role suggested by Paul in his letter to the Romans. This is attested by what Kelsey refers to as "the classic healing text" from the pastoral letter of James:¹⁰

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.
(James 5:14-16, NIV)

It is worth noting, as Kelsey does, that approximately one-fifth of the entire Gospels in the New Testament is concerned with Jesus' healing ministry, and that, except for miracles in general, this is the greatest single experiential emphasis in the narratives.¹¹ This first-century Christian literature plainly shows the importance of healing for the infant Church, and the degree to which it shaped the Church's perception of its Lord as well as its own self-understanding

¹⁰ Kelsey, 115.

¹¹ Kelsey, 54.

Not only was the life of Jesus portrayed as that of a great physician, but he was also perceived as commissioning his followers to continue his healing ministry as a part of their discipleship (cf. John 14:12f; Luke 9:1-6; Luke 10:9; Mark 16:15-18; Matt. 10:1, 5-8; notice also in these the close relationship between healing and preaching; cf. also in this regard Matt. 4:23).¹² It is evident too that healing served a proclamatory function for the earliest Christians, as may be inferred from the Gospel narratives (cf. Matt. 11:3-6; Matt. 12:22-28; Luke 4:14-21, 33-41; Luke 7:18-23; Luke 8:26-39; Luke 11:14-20). Healing was clearly an integral part of the gospel for the first-century Church. In fact, as Amos Wilder suggests, within the first-century oral traditions about Jesus and the Gospel narratives that grew out of them, healing accounts shaped the homiletical format for the gospel proclamation:

... it is important to make clear what the formative element is in ... the early Christian literature. We speak of it as the Good News ... The simplest versions of it, the Gospel in microcosm, are found in any one of the brief accounts of Jesus' healings or exorcisms ... Each such narrative is a pledge of the divine omnipotence in the overruling of evil ... For the first believers it was a condensation of their faith.¹³

¹² Case, 254.

¹³ Amos N. Wilder, The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 37, 71.

A vivid picture of such a view within the early Church is also recorded in the book of Acts. While the strict historicity of the record may be debatable, as biblical scholarship now contends, it nevertheless gives an early perspective on the ministry and message of the Church; it clearly reflects the vision of the Gospel writer's community for the preaching and practice of the Christian Church. And in that vision the mission to witness is inextricably bound up in miracle in general and in the ministry of healing in particular. The over-arching view of this relationship of healing and proclamation is very much along the lines of that summarized by Paul in his letter to the Romans (15:18-19) as noted above.¹⁴ In the first sermon in Acts, Peter's address at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), Peter argues for Jesus' authenticity as the Messiah on the basis of his "miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him" (2:22; as in Paul, these terms were understood to be inclusive of healing through divine power), which suggests that this was perhaps a common theme in early Christian preaching.

In the third chapter of Acts, Peter's healing of a crippled beggar at the temple gate occasions another sermon, thus further linking preaching and healing in the growth of the early Church. Again Peter begins with a miracle, the healing just performed:

Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk . . . By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus'

¹⁴ G.W.H. Lampe, "Miracles in the Acts of the Apostles," in Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History, ed., C.F.D. Moule, (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1965), 171-172.

name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you all can see.

(Acts 3:12,16 NIV)

Peter's sermon goes on from there with several elements common to the preaching of the Old Testament and the Hellenistic synagogue.¹⁵ As the narrative in Acts progresses, it becomes clear that the healing work of the apostles played an important role in the evangelizing activity (cf. Acts 5:12-16; 8:6,7; 9:32-42; 14:3; 15:12), and also served as confirmation of the gospel message preached (cf. Acts 20:7-12; 14:8-11; and 22:10-14, where Paul is portrayed telling of his own healing of blindness by Ananias as part of this defense of his ministry to the crowd at Jerusalem). The healings in Acts also give a link of continuity between the ministry of Jesus in Luke's Gospel and that of Peter and the disciples in Jerusalem and Paul in the Gentile mission.¹⁶ It is apparent then from the first century record in Acts also, that divine healing was an essential factor in the mission and message of Christianity from the beginning.

Jewish, as well as Christian writings of this period also attest the healing works of Jesus and early Christians.¹⁷ That these writings are polemical and unfavorable is not surprising; that they inadvertantly corroborate the healing ministry described in the Gospels is somewhat remarkable.

15 George A. Kennedy, Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times (Chapel Hill: Univeristy of North Carolina Press, 1980), 120-129.

16 Lampe, 176-177.

17 Parker, 143-145.

An Age of Argument and

Advance: The Apologists

In the second and third centuries, a paradoxical time of simultaneous persecution and growth for Christianity, this concern for healing as a preaching theme and as an evangelical/pastoral practice within the Church apparently continued. Evidence of this is found in the work of the apologists, those Church thinkers and leaders of the second and third centuries who sought to defend the faith from social prejudice and political persecution from without and heresy from within. While this may not seem to be homiletics in the strict contemporary sense of an oral discourse in conjunction with a religious event, the work of the apologists does reflect the same didactic and persuasive characteristics found in sermons throughout Christian history. In addition, as K.S. Latourette points out, the reasoning of the apologists surely represents the content of oral persuasive efforts by Christians of the time to convert pagans, as well as the nurturing and reinforcing discourse within the Christian community as it faced pagan persecution.¹⁸ So, at the very least, some semblance of the proselyting and the pastoral preaching of the period is reflected in the apologists.

While similarities in the apologists may be noted, they are by no means identical in their approach. Risking a bit of over-generalization, it may be said that the apologists in the East, surrounded by Greek thought, were more concerned with philosophical matters, while those in the West, faced with the more political and

¹⁸ K.S. Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The First Five Centuries, vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1937), 121, 126.

practical Roman mentality, were more concerned with showing that Christians were not enemies of the state and destructive to civilization.¹⁹ Again risking some degree of over-generalization, it may be said that divine healing as a theme and an argument emerges from the apologists as follows:

1. The healings and miracles of Jesus (and to some degree, the apostles) guarantee the validity of his teachings and are evidence of his divine nature, an argument similar to that in Peter's sermon in Acts 2 above.²⁰

2. The healing ministry of the Christians of that time is a proof of their power over the dark spiritual forces that seek to disrupt the world, and an evidence of their goodness, benevolence, concern for the world and loyalty as citizens as well as proof of the truth of their teachings as opposed to the pagan's polytheistic practices.

3. Healing in the ministry of Jesus and his Church was also used against the spiritualistic arguments of Greeks and Gnostics to defend the value of the body and the theological doctrines of the incarnation, the resurrection of the body, and the atonement.²¹

An examination of all the evidence in the apologists would fill an entire book, but a look at some of the many examples from the works of key Fathers of the Early Church should illustrate this rhetorical use of healing in the second and third centuries.

The earliest existing apologies are those of Justin Martyr, from about the middle of the second century. Justin, educated as a teacher

19 Latourette, 126.

20 G.W.H. Lampe, "Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic," in Miracles, C.F.D. Moule, ed., 208.

21 Kelsey, 134.

and philosopher before his conversion, opened the first Christian school at Rome, and wrote intelligently in defense of the Christian faith.²² In his Second Apology, addressed to the Roman Senate, Justin defends the significance of Jesus as Savior and the value of Christians to the Roman world:

For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.²³

And in his Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, Justin refers to the present-day healings and exorcisms performed by Christians as a proof of the validity and power of Christianity (chapters 30, 39 and 76), and finally argues for the divinity and power of Christ on the basis of this same evidence:

For every demon, when exorcised in the name of this very Son of God ... is overcome and subdued. But though you exorcise any demon in the name of any of those who were amongst you (i.e., the Jews) - either kings, or righteous men, or prophets, or patriarchs - it will not be subject to you.²⁴

22 Holland, 22.

23 "The Second Apology of Justin for the Christians," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 190.

24 "Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew", in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, 209, 214, 236 and 241.

In a striking combination of classical rhetoric, sophistic cleverness and Christian piety, the Greek apologist Tatian, a student of Justin's, offers his defense of the faith in the Address to the Greeks, an apology which was perhaps delivered orally as well as circulating in written form, and dates from around the time of Justin or a few years later in the second century.²⁵ He first argues for belief in the resurrection on the basis of divine power to restore the flesh (chapter 6), and then bitingly attacks the Greek polytheism as pantheism and demon-workship (chapters 12-17), and appeals to divine healing as a logical sign of the superior monotheism of Christianity:²⁶

. . . you acknowledge the dominion of many rather than the rule of one, accustoming yourselves to follow demons as if they were mighty . . . A diseased affection is not destroyed by a counter-affection (a reference to the previously discussed supposed power of demons to effect cures), nor is a maniac cured by hanging little amulets of leather upon him . . . how is it becoming to ascribe to matter the relief of the insane, and not to God? For by their art they (i.e., demons) turn men aside from the pious acknowledgement of God, leading them to place confidence in herbs and roots . . . But medicine and everything included in it is an invention of the same kind. If any one is healed by matter, through trusting to it, much more will he be healed by having recourse to the power of God . . . Why is he who trusts in the system of matter not willing to trust in God? For what reason do you not approach the more powerful Lord, but rather seek to cure yourself, like the dog with grass, or the stag with a viper . . . Why do you deify the objects of nature? . . . Yield to the power of the Logos! The demons do not cure, but by their art make men their captives. And the most admirable Justin has rightly denounced them as robbers.²⁷

²⁵ Kennedy, 133. 135.

²⁶ Evelyn Frost, Christian Healing (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1940), 11.

²⁷ "Address of Tatian to the Greeks," in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, 71-73 (chapters 14, 17 and 18). It should be noted that this work of Tatian's was composed during his period of orthodoxy prior to his involvement with the Encratite heresy.

The power and practice in the Christian community of healing by divine aid alone were apparently assumed by Tatian as on-going contemporary phenomena, and strongly commended to the Greeks.

An interesting use of the theme of healing is found in the work of Irenaeus, Against Heresies, written around 180 A.D.²⁸ Writing to explain and combat the false and dangerous doctrines of various heretics, including Marcion, Valentinus, the Nicolaitians, Ebionites, docetists, and others, Irenaeus refers to the healing works of Jesus and to the miracles going on currently in the Church as proof of the truth of his views, and as evidence of the benefit the Roman world receives from Christianity. He also points to the apparent inability of the heretics to perform cures as proof of the falsity of their teachings. His list of the cures performed by the Church includes restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, exorcising demons, healing lameness and paralysis, remedying the effects of external accidents and - through the prayer of an entire Christian community - raising the dead. And in the process Irenaeus sheds some light on the means by which the Church works these wonders (without price or reward, he adds, in obedience to Jesus' words in Matt. 10:8, and in contradistinction to the practice of the pagan healing cults):

28 Frost, 11.

Nor does she (i.e., the Church) perform anything by means of angelic invocations, or by incantations, or by any other wicked curicous art; but, directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit . . . she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind, and not to lead them into error.

(Against Heresies II 32.5) ²⁹

Irenaeus' argument in favor of the bodily resurrection (V 12.6) is employed in combatting gnostic doctrines; and in arguing specifically against Marcion's anti-Old Testament teachings, Irenaeus cites Jesus' healing recorded in Luke 13:11-17 as proof that "the Lord vindicated Abraham's posterity by loosing them from bondage and calling them to salvation" (IV 8.2).

The writings of Tertullian from the end of the second century give further evidence of how the theme of healing was employed by the apologists. In singing the praises of God and the Christian virtues He inspires, Tertullian speaks of God as the source of all healing (Of Patience, 15); in reviling pagan indulgence in the pursuit of pleasure, he claims the healings and exorcisms performed by Christians are a more noble and enriching occupation (The Shows, 29); in attacking the spiritualistic gnostic views of Marcion, he takes note of Christ's healings as evidence of divine concern for the body, and as indication of a bodily resurrection (On the Flesh of Christ, 4, and On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 34 and 37); in asserting the superiority of Christianity over pagan religion, he cites the Christian power to exorcise demons as proof of the power of the faith,

²⁹ "Irenaeus Against Heresies", in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I, 407 (II 31.2), 409 (II 33.4,5) and 418 (III 5.2).

and as a means of conversion (Apology 23 and 27).³⁰ And in a strong protest to the proconsul in North Africa during the persecutions there, Tertullian cites specific healing evidence from government circles:

All this (i.e., evidence of Roman authorities dropping charges against Christians) might officially be brought under your notice . . . For the clerk of one of them (i.e., the government legal officials) who was liable to be thrown upon the ground by an evil spirit, was set free of his affliction; as was also the relative of another, and the little boy of a third. And how many men of rank . . . have been delivered from devils, and healed of diseases! Even Severus himself, (coemperor with his son) the father of Antonine, was graciously mindful of the Christians. For he sought out the Christian Proculus, surnamed Torpacion, the steward of Eubrodias, and in gratitude for his once having cured him by anointing he kept him in his palace till the day of his death . . .³¹

The work of the apologists reached a pinnacle with the great treatise Against Celsus, written by Origen sometime in the first half of the third century. Written in response to a late second-century attack on Christianity, entitled The True Teaching, by the Greek philosopher Celsus, the apology brings up the healings and exorcisms of Jesus and his followers at several points in its effort to dismantle pagan thinking piece by piece.³² Origen refutes Celsus' accusation against the Christians of demon-worship and necromancy by pointing out that in the name of Christ Christians do exorcize demons, and that frequently "the announcement of the narratives which relate to Him" (another early pastoral use of the

30 From The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3.

31 "To Scapula," quoted in Frost, 100.

32 Kennedy, 134.

healing traditions?) are a part of this process, but certainly "Christians employ no spells or incantations, but the simple name of Jesus" (I.6). In response to the charge that Jesus was a sorcerer who practiced magic learned from the Egyptians, Origen refers to the miracles of Jesus, the apostles, and of Christians of that day also who "expel evil spirits and perform many cures" through the same Holy Spirit which appeared to Jesus at his baptism, all of which serves "to establish the divinity of the doctrine of Jesus" (I.46). Origen's reply to the philosopher's attempt to belittle Jesus by comparison to the heroes and gods of Greek mythology (a comparison which has been explored by some modern schools of biblical scholarship) also rests on the healing power and record of Christ's Church:

For we assert that the whole habitable world contains evidence of the works of Jesus, in the existence of those Churches of God which have been founded through Him . . . And the name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expels demons, and also take away diseases; (I.67).³³

Origen mentions in passing his own status as an eye-witness to such miracles (II. 8), and again argues for the value and divinity of Jesus' work on the basis of the present-day healing witness of the Christian community (II.33). He replies to the argument against Christianity that many believe in and turn to the god Aesculapius for healing by asserting that he

³³ Cf. Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," Jesus and the Historian, ed. F. Trotter (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 114-133.

. . . can clearly show a countless multitude of Greeks and Barbarians who acknowledge the existence of Jesus. And some give evidence of their having received through this faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things, and of Jesus, along with a mention of His history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils. (III.24).

In all, more than a dozen clear references are made in Origen's treatise to the healing and exorcizing record of Jesus and his followers.³⁴ In Origen, as in the other apologists, healing is not the primary theme, though it is a consistent one; yet this very fact may suggest their conception of its place in Christian life and ministry, and the very naturalness with which it was accepted and practiced. The central and living theme for the Church in this era was the resurrection of Christ Jesus, and the gospel-message of this resurrection included the redemption of humanity from every form of bondage, both spiritual and physical.³⁵ Thus the body as well as the soul was perceived as redeemed by Christ from death and its various manifestations, such as disease, dementia, and sin; and salvation was to be experienced here and now, and not just beyond the grave.³⁶ The healing work of Jesus and his Church helped to proclaim the joy, vitality and practicality of this gospel-message, and played a

34 "Origen Against Celsus", in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 4, as follows: I.6,25,46,67; II.8,33,48; III.24,28,36; VII.35,67; VIII.58.

35 Frost, 69.

36 Frost, 17-18, 28-33.

supporting role in the apologetic and proclamatory endeavors of the early Church.³⁷ The use of healing as a theme in the apologetics/homiletics of the early Church is also attested in the works of Minucius Felix, Quadratus, Theophilus of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Pseudo-Clement, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Ignatius, Hippolytus, Victorinus, and Dionysius of Alexandria.³⁸

The Ambivalent Era of the

Fourth and Fifth Centuries

The fourth and fifth centuries were an ambivalent time for the Christian Church, a time of contradictions. With the conversion of Constantine early in the fourth century, Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the persecutions ceased and the faith prospered and grew even more rapidly than before. It has also been characterized as a time of preaching excellence, a time marked by such great preachers and thinkers as Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine, and by rapid development of homiletical

37 Lampe, "Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic," 218.

38 For detailed discussion, see Frost, 20-110.

theory and skills.³⁹ And yet it is also characterized as a time in which began a political, social and spiritual decline that led the Church and the shattered Empire into the Dark Ages.⁴⁰ It was during this time that the Church's power to heal physical ills by spiritual means waned.⁴¹ Also, after reaching the highwater marks of Chrysostom and Augustine, Christian preaching began to calcify and ceased to show any remarkable power.⁴² The period is aptly summarized by H.C. Robins:

With the period after Constantine religion became safe, established, and conventional, the spiritual temperature dropped from its early red-hot faith and expectancy, and divisions and controversies slowed down the urge of the Spirit. Physical and medical science took the place of spiritual healing by God's direct action. Spiritual healing ceased gradually to be the norm; it was regarded as abnormal, and was associated not with the 'saints' which the New Testament called all Christians to aspire to be, but was largely confined to canonized 'saints' with a capital S.⁴³

However, healing as a pastoral practice and a homiletical resource did not fade altogether or all at once in this period of decline. At the beginning of the fourth century the apologist Arnobius employs the healing record of Jesus and the healing ministry of his apostles and the contemporary Church in his arsenal of weapons to deal a final blow to a dying polytheism:

39 Holland, 24.

40 Holland. 27; cf. Dawson, 159-171, and Kelsey, 157-161, 191-206.

41 Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951). 76-82.

42 Holland, 27.

43 H.C. Robins, "Spiritual Healing in the History of the Church," The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, July 1956: 171.

For it is known that Christ . . . opened the ears of the deaf, drove away blindness from the eyes, gave speech to the dumb, loosened the rigidity of joints . . . was wont to heal . . . leprosy, agues, dropsies, and all other kinds of ailments . . . What act like these have all these gods done, by whom you allege that help has been brought to the sick and imperilled? . . . Moreover by His own power He not only performed those miraculous deeds. . . but, what is more sublime, He has permitted many others to . . . perform them by the use of his name.

And not long afterward Arnobius' pupil, the rhetorician Lactantius, also attested to and argued from the power of Christians in his day to heal and exorcize demons.⁴⁵ Testimonies of physical healing through prayer concerning his family and friends are found in some of the orations of the noted fourth-century preacher, Gregory of Nazianzus.⁴⁶ His contemporary, Gregory of Nyssa, also made use of contemporary healings.⁴⁷ However, in the latter's works traces of the superstitious element linking the miraculous to shrines, relics and martyrs are evident. Yet, as Kelsey notes, Gregory of Nyssa was the only Eastern theologian to relate healing to his total theology, and to show how central the healings of Jesus were to faith in his resurrection.⁴⁸

44 "Arnobius Against the Heathen", in The Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 6, 426-427. Chapters 48-56 are an extended and eloquent argument against the power of polytheistic gods on the basis of Christian healing power.

45 The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, "The Divine Institutes" (II.16, V.22) and "The Epitome of the Divine Institutes" (51) by Lactantius.

46 Orations VII, XVIII, and XLIII, cited in Kelsey, 168-169.

47 Kelsey, 171-173.

48 Kelsey, 174

Perhaps the homiletical ambivalence of this period regarding healing can be best illustrated by the two master preachers of the age, John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo. As Kelsey notes, Chrysostom expanded and expounded on the healing of Jesus and the apostles as few other preachers of his age did, and focused on the fact that the healings were performed and continued to be done in his day, not by men but by God, whose power is unchanging; and Chrysostom also supported this view with references to healings and miracles occurring in his own day (for example, "A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles," Homily X; Homily I; Homily XXXVIII; "The Homilies on the Statues," Homily X.7, Homily I.5ff and Homily VIII.I.).⁴⁹ Yet the theological thrust of his "Homily on the Paralytic Let Down through the Roof," written towards the end of the fourth century, is an affirmation of an emerging theological shift wherein illness and misfortune are God's means of testing and purifying the faithful flock, and disease becomes also the divine punishment for sin. The healing narrative is perceived in his homily as an object-lesson on sin and faith rather than a hopeful proclamation of God's power to effect human transformation and restoration. The focus in the homily shifts myopically and exclusively to the healing of sin, so that human sickness and suffering are simply to be borne with God-given patience and faith, as illustrated by the afflicted people in the Scriptures:

⁴⁹ Kelsey, 176.

Has some other man a body which is beset with disease and countless sufferings? The condition of these paralytics (i.e., their faith and hope) may be an ample source of consolation and beside these the blessed and brave disciple of Paul who was continually suffering from disorders and never had any respite from prolonged infirmity, (a reference to I Timothy 5:23) . . . Nevertheless after such calamities of this kind he (Job, whose afflictions have been referred to previously) was not petulant but what does he say - "the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away" . . . Let this speech be our utterance also over each event which befalls us; whether it be loss of property, or infirmity of body. . .⁵⁰

The shift in theological emphasis in the sermon is a subtle one, but discernible, and suggests the tensions in Chrysostom on this point of divine healing.

At the outset of his ministry in the latter part of the fourth century, Augustine of Hippo was convinced that miracles no longer happened. Shortly after he was baptized, he expressed a view which summarized the dispensationalist argument which would dominate later Church perceptions on divine healing:

(now that the Church had spread over the whole earth) the miracles of earlier times are by divine disposition no longer permitted. This is to prevent the spirit from going on seeking after visible things. If miracles were to become an everyday occurrence they would cease to affect human beings, whereas in the early days they inspired them by their novelty.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Chrysostom, "Homily on the Paralytic Let Down through the Roof", in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 9 ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 219-220 (emphasis added).

⁵¹ De Vera Religione, 25, 47, quoted in F. Van der Meer, Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church, trs. B. Battershaw and G.R. Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 540.

A decade later, in a sermon on the healing of the blind man in Jericho, Augustine reaffirmed this position, explaining that physical healings by spiritual means no longer occur, but that the healing going on presently in the Church, the healing of the soul and the raising of the spiritually dead to new life, is just as important, if not more so.⁵²

However, by the time he had completed The City of God, Augustine had evidently changed his mind. The last book of that work contained a section in which he recorded 25 healings from his diocese, and mentions that he instituted the recording and attesting of miracles there

. . . once I realized how many miracles were occurring in our own day and which were so like the miracles of old and also how wrong it would be to allow the memory of these marvels of divine power to perish from among our people. It is only two years ago that the keeping of records was begun here in Hippo, and already, at this writing, we have nearly seventy attested miracles.⁵³

Many of the healings recorded in The City of God include elements of the superstitious association with relics, shrines, saints and martyrs which by the fifth century were an integral part of popular piety, and which served to eventually undermine serious concern for healing; but many others are evidently serious testimonies to the power of prayer, of the sacraments, and of the faith of the Christian community.⁵⁴ There is apparent in Augustine's last book of

52 Sermones 88,2,3, cited in van der Meer, 540.

53 The City of God XXII.8, quoted in Kelsey, 185.

54 van der Meer, 539.

The City of God some attempt to allow healing to function as it did for the earlier apologists, as a witness to the truth and power of the resurrection.⁵⁵ Van der Meer indicates that healing became a more than occasional part of Augustine's sermons in the latter part of his career, and that in the Retractions written just a few years before his death, Augustine plainly repudiated the assertion of his earlier years that miracles had ceased after the apostolic period.⁵⁶ At the end of his ministry, Augustine appears as a man of his time, reflecting the contradictions, tensions and tendencies of the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries with regard to religious healing.

Epilogue: After Augustine

In spite of Augustine's about-face on healing late in life, the centuries since have indicated that the currents in the Church have by and large continued to run counter to the view of healing expressed in the apostolic and apologetic literature of the first three centuries. This will be discussed in the next chapter, but at this point a sampling of sermons over the centuries up to the present will indicate the validity of this view.

Peter Chrysologus' sermon from a generation after Augustine on Jesus' healing of the woman with the hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:22-34) so allegorizes the account that the

⁵⁵ The City of God, Book XXII.5,7,8,9.

⁵⁶ Van der Meer, 541, 551-553.

fact of healing is lost sight of altogether.⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas's thirteenth-century sermon on the healing of the official's son at Capernaum (John 4:46-54) is so focused on the Cross and the problem of sin that all the Scriptures he cites in the sermon, which in the original biblical context refer to healing of the whole individual, morally, spiritually and physically, are made to focus exclusively and somewhat scholastically on sin and moral healing.⁵⁸ And in a recently published work on preaching from the biblical miracle stories, R.J. Allen includes a sermon on the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage in Mark that takes a somewhat psychologized metaphorical slant on the old allegorical interpretation, and focuses on emotion and spiritual well-being as the primary existential application of the narrative.⁵⁹ In this regard Kelsey makes mention of the work of two noted Bible scholars (Gunther Bornkamm, Norman Perrin) who suggest that this traditional liberal scholarship approach to the New Testament healings, which either rationalizes, dismisses or psycho-theologizes them out of the realm of practical experience, may no longer be the most accurate or most productive approach.⁶⁰

Among the lessons of the history of the relationship between healing and preaching in the first few centuries of the Church's life a most arresting one is that the spiritual conviction and vitalit

57 Sermon 36 in The Fathers of the Church, vol. 17.

58 Aquinas, "The Fever of Sin and its Cure", in 20 Centuries of Great Preaching eds. C.E. Fant and W.M. Pinson, vol. 1 (Waco: Word Books, 1971), 199-201.

59 Ronald J. Allen, Our Eyes Can Be Opened: Preaching the Miracle Stories of the Synoptic Gospels Today (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 119-124.

60 Kelsey, 365-366.

necessary in healing by divine power are also necessary in the powerful promulgation of a divinely revealed gospel. The preaching and healing activity of the Church is a reflection of its level of genuine Christianity. In his survey of the preaching of the Church, Holland writes: "Where the Word is preached, God is present to do his mighty works," which suggests that truly healing is as much a part of⁶¹ proclaiming God's Word as is preaching.

⁶¹ Holland, 10.

CHAPTER 3

Preaching and Healing:

Theological Unity and
Historical DisintegrationTheological Unity: Healing

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
(Luke 4:18,19 KJV)

It is with these words from the prophetic book of Isaiah that Luke says Jesus begins his public ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. Clearly Jesus and his first followers saw this triad of activity as a single, unified ministry, cemented by the intent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.¹ From the beginning of Christian proclamation, then, preaching and healing were tightly woven together into the fabric of Christian ministry. And, as has been indicated in the previous section, this relationship persisted as part of the model for the Church's kerygma and ministry into the fourth century.

That this is not the usual case today is both documented and evident.² Many cultural, theological and scientific factors can

1 James Kallas, The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles (Greenwich, CT,: Seabury Press, 1961), 8-11.

2 Frederick H. Borsch, Power in Weakness: New Hearing for Gospel Stories of Healing and Discipleship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), viii.

combine to account for this, but the net result is a truncated perception of the Church's mission. A look at the terms traditionally used to express the Church's concept of ministry and purpose in relation to healing and preaching will substantiate this claim.

From the biblical tradition and throughout its history, the Church has had as a primary concern the reconciliation of humanity to God - the process of human salvation or redemption (Acts 13:46-50; Rom. 1:16, 5:8-11, 2 Cor. 5:14-20; Gal. 4:4-7; Titus 2:11-14).³ These words - reconciliation, redemption, salvation - have been commonly used to describe the ministry of the Church, and their meanings are revealing in connection with both healing and preaching.

The Greek term translated as reconciliation (katallage; 2 Cor. 5:18-20) in the English Bible has the connotation of change in order to restore to an original state; the Latin word from which the English term reconciliation derives has as one of its meanings to unite or make whole. To restore to an original state of health or well-being and to make whole are the basic meanings of the English verb "to heal" (from an Anglo-Saxon word for whole).⁴

The word redemption (apolutrosis; Rom. 3:24, 8:23), like reconciliation, carries the connotation of change (loosening) for the purpose of restoration or improvement as one of its meanings, and shares with salvation the notion of saving or rescuing. Historically for the Church the process of salvation or redemption has focused on

³ James N. Lapsley, Salvation and Health: The Inter-locking Processes of Life (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 35-37.

⁴ See also Seward Hiltner, Preface to Pastoral Theology, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), 89 for a discussion of healing as the restoration of wholeness.

saving the soul from sin or the psyche from meaninglessness and anxiety, but the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible indicate that this notion of salvation is incomplete. The Greek word *soteria*, translated as salvation in the Bible, had as its basic meaning in common usage bodily health, but was expanded by the New Testament writers to become a comprehensive term for healing of the whole human being - body, mind, spirit, relations.⁵ Similarly, both the Hebrew and Greek terms for saving (yasha in the Hebrew, sozo in Greek) had the ultimate root meaning of to be made whole, indicating that the Bible writers sensed an intimate relationship between the concept of salvation and of healing in both a physical and a spiritual sense:

"There is no separation between salvation for the soul and health for the body. Health and salvation come from the same root word. It means wholeness, or the re-establishment of the whole that was broken. . . Deliverance, salvation and healing are all one in the newly created wholeness of God's perfect reign of love. It is the same thing to forgive sins and to heal disease (see Luke 5:20).⁶

Evidently in their original meanings the words for healing, reconciliation, redemption and salvation all partook of the notion of making whole or restoring to wholeness, indicating that the Church in its concern for salvation must also be concerned with healing at all

5. Claude A. Frazier, ed., Faith Healing: Finger of God or Scientific Curiosity?. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1973), 52.

6 Dan Rhoades, "A Theological Basis for the Church Delivering Health Services in the Present American Society," unpublished paper, School of Theology at Claremont, CA, n.d., 13-14.

its levels - physical, as well as moral, spiritual and relational. Stated broadly, salvation may be considered as the process in which divinity embraces humanity and transformation and regeneration are experienced in a concrete way, resulting in a heightened awareness of relation to the divine and culminating in the destruction of all sin, sickness and death in the absolute reign of God (cf. Rev. 21:3,4).

Apart from etymological evidence, further indication that healing should be viewed as a subset of salvation may be derived from the record of Jesus' own view of his ministry, and the ministry for which he commissioned his followers. As a vital part of his ministry, Jesus' healing work confirmed and gave experiential evidence of what⁷ he preached and taught concerning God's Kingdom and salvation. While the historical accuracy of the Bible accounts with regard to the healing activity of Jesus and his followers may be debated by scholars, the general picture presented of Jesus as a healer, and of the place of healing in the activity of the early Church, is widely recognized and accepted. Like his very life, his healings were in a sense instances of "the Word made flesh" (John 1:14). They were a living sign of the salvation he proclaimed, a concrete demonstration of God's kingdom breaking into human lives:

⁷ Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 63-66.

Jesus seems to have been convinced that through his ministry the power of the kingdom of God was making itself known and the ancient promises of the prophets were beginning to be fulfilled . . . The acts of healing . . . are not, then, added parts of the good news of the kingdom. They are a crucial way in which the kingdom comes - - by which the ruling love and justice of God are made known. They are acts of power of the approaching kingdom, enacted parables of its healing and saving character.⁸

Jesus' healing were thus a means of proclaiming his message of salvation, potent parables in which redemption was experienced in a degree and the eschatological kingdom of God began to be realized existentially.⁹ In this way he saw preaching and healing as bound up together with his ministry by the common thread of the salvific power of God's kingdom (a link which was passed on to his followers, as indicated by Matt. 10:1,7,8); the revelation of the reign of God in human lives was the binding thread in Jesus' ministry between his work of preaching and healing.

Theological Unity: Preaching

Some segments of scholarly thinking on homiletics see further a connection between the purpose and act of preaching and the divine plan for human salvation.¹⁰ Rudolf Buttmann, while his conception of salvation may differ substantially from that of the New Testament writers, sees salvation at the heart of Christian proclamation.

⁸ Borsch, ix-x; cf. Luke 11:14-20.

⁹ For a discussion of Jesus' salvific ministry as "realized eschatology" and how this relates to his notion of the kingdom of God, see C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 34-51.

¹⁰ For one concise treatment of biblical notions of salvation from a contemporary homiletical point of view, see Stevenson, 25-33.

. . . the salvation-occurrence is no-where present except in the proclaiming, accosting, demanding, and promising word of preaching . . . the salvation-occurrence continues to take place in the proclamation of the word . . . It is present not in the after-effect of a significant fact of world-history but in the proclamation of the word . . .¹¹

Thus for Bultmann the preaching of the gospel of salvation is part of the salvation-process itself.

Karl Barth also sees in preaching a salvific encounter with the divine:

When the Gospel is preached, God speaks . . . Thus preaching takes place in obedience, by listening to the will of God . . . It is the exercise of sovereign power on the part of God and obedience on the part of man . . . Preaching, when it is true₁₂ to what God has revealed to us, effects reconciliation.
..

Preaching is then, like healing, tightly knit into the structure of salvation. Like healing, it can be seen as an instance of God's self-revelation in a concrete situation. Preaching is, like healing, more than anything else, a deed effected through divine power wherein the saving and reconciling presence of God and His reign are communicated and experienced.¹³ In this broad sense healing can preach and preaching can heal, and both are part of and point to the process of human reconciliation with God; both are instances and

¹¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, tr. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 302.

¹² Karl Barth, The Preaching of the Gospel, tr. B.E. Hooke (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 12, 16, 22.

¹³ Thor Hall, "The Call to Salvation", Duke Divinity School Review 29 (1964): 114-116.

avenues for the redemptive and revelatory activity of God.

Given this extensive evidence for the proper connection of healing and preaching in the redemptive mission of the Church, it is natural to ask why, over the centuries, healing has not had a more integral place in the thinking, proclamation and practice of the Church. While a complete answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study, a brief sketch of the developments in thought about healing (as part of thought about miracles in general) and preaching will help to put their contemporary relationship into proper perspective.

Historical Disintegration

The first factor to consider is a significant shift in the kerygma of the Church, which began subtly in the early Church. As Kallas notes,

. . . we do not preach the message of Jesus . . . we preach a message about Jesus . . . we do not repeat or expand the message of Jesus, the message he preached. Instead, we preach about Jesus, about what he did and how he died.¹⁴

Almost from the beginning the Church proclaimed a message about Jesus as the Christ rather than the good news of God's kingdom present and

¹⁴ Kallas, 7.

active which Jesus proclaimed in his own preaching and healing. This shift in the focus of the kerygma is reflected in Bultmann's view that Jesus' message was a "presupposition" for the New Testament's theology, and not a part of that theology.¹⁵ Dodd notes that for the apostolic preachers, to preach Christ was to preach the kingdom of God; nevertheless the seed of distinction was sown and would flower in an increasing distance between humanity and the kingdom of heaven (contrary to the message of Jesus; cf. Luke 17:20ff, Mark 1:44ff) as Christian proclamation developed over the centuries.¹⁶ Thus even in the midst of its beginning as a healing Church the message of the Church was one subtle step removed from the theological groundwork which lay behind Jesus' own healing and preaching activity. Perhaps one of the contributing reasons for the decline of spiritual healing in Christian practice is that Jesus' message about the kingdom was misunderstood from the outset:

¹⁵ Bultmann, 3; cf. also 33ff.

¹⁶ C.H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Development. (Chicago: Willett, Clark and Co, 1937), 3-4.

Jesus' announcement that "the kingdom of God is at hand" was not understood. The fact is that it never is understood. This is the real tragedy of the Christian movement. The problem of Christianity throughout its history has been to keep its followers directed toward the central purpose of the Kingdom of God.¹⁷

Frost notes within this kerygmatic shift a further theological disintegration, wherein the early expectant emphasis on the Resurrection, as evidence of the immanent power of God's reign, gives way to a growing concern for the efficacy of the Cross as the means of a future transcendent salvation.¹⁸ Coupled with this were: (1) the beginnings of a view within the Church that sickness was a punishment for sin sent by God, (a view no doubt detected within certain strands of Old Testament thinking), and therefore to be borne as a spiritual discipline in accordance with the divine will; and (2) the growing association of spiritual healing with sacred relics, shrines and saints, which left legitimate religious healing vulnerable to abuse, superstition, and consequent rejection by thoughtful people.¹⁹ This superstitious tendency focused on the miraculous element itself instead of its meaning as a vital eschatological sign of salvation, and contributed to a loss of the real reason for Christian healing (the earliest Christians were alert to this danger, as Luke 10:17-20 indicates).

¹⁷ H.R. Deal, The Kingdom of God Is Now (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), 15.

¹⁸ Frost, 190-192.

¹⁹ Frost, 179-190.

Another factor to be considered is the large numbers of unregenerate citizens that became nominal Christians and flooded the Church with superstition, paganism and an almost overwhelming lack of spiritual commitment following the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century A.D. Both preaching and healing, as well as the sense of Christianity as a way of life in general, were dealt a heavy blow by this numerical success.²⁰

Along with these developments there emerged a virulent dualism which persists to this day, and which was initially apparent in: (1) the emerging asceticism which sapped Christianity's concern for human welfare in this world and diverted spiritual energies from preaching and healing, and reflected a nascent theological emphasis on the divine transcendence and lack of involvement in human affairs;²¹ and (2) the increasing appropriation of methods of healing by material means from Greek culture. Against the backdrop of the growing spiritual frigidity of the Church, these methods found a fertile setting, for they

made very little demand, if any, on the faith of the patient and required no qualifications of a moral character from the healer.²²

This anthropological sundering has persisted down to the present, leaving the emphasis on the material:

20 Holland, 29.

21 See Kelsey, 195-203.

22 Weatherhead, 80-81.

A pagan culture glorifies the body as if it were the ultimate of value. The predominantly sensate culture that surrounds us has made its impact on our body-consciousness. For decades the prevalent attitude of the physical sciences, which are essentially materialistic and mechanistic, exerted a strong influence on the medical sciences, which treated men essentially as chemical or mechanical entities . . . In an atmosphere of chemical and mechanical concern the soul is easily dismissed.²³

The Church's self-imposed exile from the realm of mundane human concerns was soon reinforced theologically and biblically, and coincided with a decline in the place of preaching in the Church's life. An increasingly allegorical approach to scriptural interpretation, first popularized by Origen, began to gain ground in later periods and eventually dominated homiletical use of the Bible for centuries. This interpretive approach was not satisfied by the simpler, more practical applications of earlier eras which allowed the healing narratives to speak as paradigms for ministry and signs of the power and love of God, but sought a more abstract, scholastic and esoteric understanding of the accounts. As preaching concerns became further detached from living, personal concerns, it ceased to play an important part in worship.²⁴ Liturgy and ceremonialism came to the fore, and were viewed as efficacious for the assurance of a desirable afterlife which was all that really mattered.²⁵ Gradually healing (when it was spoken of at all) came to refer to healing of the soul through

23 E.N. Jackson, "Mediating the Faith that Makes Whole," Southwestern Journal of Theology 5 (April 1963): 57.

24 As many scholars and practitioners of homiletics have noted, preaching, to be authentic, must address human needs. See R.E. Sleeth, Proclaiming the Word (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 86-104.

25 Lapsley, 39.

confession and forgiveness as a preparation for the afterlife. Even today, by and large, the majority of references to healing in religious circles are concerned with psychological and emotional well-being only.²⁶

It is noteworthy that this decline in preaching and the theological shift away from practical Christian healing as nothing more than an early dispensation now ended or as the province of superstition or the occasional special saint, were set against the backdrop of the collapse of the Roman Empire, the disintegration of western civilization and the descent into the Dark Ages.²⁷ The world seemed in general a place of poverty, ignorance and evil where there was no direct experience of God's love, concern for humanity, or self-revelation. In such circumstances, in spite of a crying need for both the proclamation and the practice of the gospel in healing, there is little evidence of either. Although occasional luminaries such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi at the end of this period demonstrated the potential of Christian ministry for both healing and preaching, the overall tenor of the age is one of homiletical silence and salvific procrastination.

As medieval civilization emerged out of the Dark Ages there was a dramatic shift in the theological and philosophical foundations of thought. Plato's idealistic world view was replaced by that of

26 Cf., for example William Johnston, Silent Music (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 105-138, and the recent sermonic treatments of biblical healings by R.J. Allen and F.H. Borsch.

27 Holland, 31; cf. Kelsey, 201-204.

Aristotle, which resulted in a rationalistic outlook with little place for healing or any direct experience of a transcendent God of judgment.²⁸

As almost an overcompensation for the ignorance of the Dark Ages, the age of Scholastic Theology arrived, with Thomas Aquinas as the chief exponent of its systematic thought. Although the beginnings of a renewal of preaching are evident in the thirteenth century (forerunner of the re-birth of preaching during the Reformation), the systematic theology of Aquinas had no real place for spiritual healing in its emphasis on human intellectual and sensory experience.²⁹

Unfortunately, the Reformers, while they rethought and re-established the importance of preaching in Christian experience, were unable to escape the theological world-view established by Aquinas:

The Protestant reformation changed many aspects of church life and practice, but it never attacked the problem of the world view of the Scholastics against whom it revolted. Among Protestants this has not changed much since. It did not occur to the Protestant leaders of the Reformation that anything was required but to get rid of the superfluous practices such as unction and indulgences. They did not realize that the whole base of Christian theology needed to be rethought if Christian experience was to be central to church doctrine.³⁰

28 Kelsey, 201-207.

29 For a full discussion of Aquinas' theology in relation to healing, cf. Kelsey, 213-220.

30 Kelsey, 220-221.

Thus the Reformation saw the return of efforts to proclaim the good news; but it was still good news oriented toward salvation of the soul, and omitting some of the other practical, mundane effects of God's grace. The Calvinism that emerged as the central theological heritage of that era held that the age of miracles, including healing, was past, and that illness and human distress in general were to be viewed as divine punishment or testing.³¹

The thinking of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, based firmly on Aristotelian rationalism and bolstered by the mechanistic approach of Newtonian physics, gave rise to Deism, which emphasized morality, reason and natural law over against divine self-revelation and involvement in human life. In this intellectual climate theologians and Bible scholars followed the lead of thinkers like Spinoza, Locke and Hume in questioning the historicity of the Bible miracles, including the healings. The natural and historical sciences shaped the world-view from which the biblical accounts were examined, and the ultimate result, as proposed by D.F. Strauss in the mid-nineteenth century, was to view the portions of the Bible which did not square with the modern mind-set as historical myth, meaning by this that these accounts function beyond and above the level of pure historical reality. This has been the predominant view of biblical scholarship up to the present, with Rudolf Bultmann as the chief proponent of this view in the twentieth century.³² Bultmann's

31 Lapsley, 41-42.

32 A complete treatment of the history of Bible scholarship on the miracles is outside the scope of this study; effort has been made merely to point the general direction of thought in this regard. For a more in-depth summary, cf. Howard Clark Kee, Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 1-39.

existential interpretation of biblical myth may be viewed as the capstone of the current incarnation of the centuries-old allegorical method of biblical interpretation, which allows the healing message of the Bible to function solely at the psychological, emotional and relational level, thus treating healing (and salvation in general) only at the "intellectual" existential level: The Word is made present, it dwells among us and addresses us, but it is not "made flesh." Thus, in a sense, biblical scholarship and Christian homiletical practice in general have yet to move beyond the influence of the Scholastic Theology of Thomas Aquinas.³³

A fresh nuance on this stance has been offered by structural and literary criticism in recent years, which seek to go beyond the form critical and historical approaches in considering the healing narratives as stories, taking into account (rather than dismissing) the background and world-view out of which these stories emerged. This approach seeks to discover the self-understanding of the early Church within these narratives, while still keeping them safely outside the bounds of the modern mind-set.³⁴ While this is a step in the right direction towards evaluating the healings in the Bible on their own terms, it remains to be seen whether this will enable scholarship to move beyond its Aristotelian boundaries and account for the current revival of the practices of Christian healing.

33 For a complete discussion of the evolution and relation of scientific and theological thought, cf. Alan Richardson, The Bible in the Age of Science (London: SCM Press, 1961), 9-141.

34 For an example of this approach, cf. Allen.

And that is basically where general opinion in biblical scholarship stands today. It essentially remains planted in the rationalist or naturalist camp in which biblical criticism first took root, arraying itself against the obvious inconsistencies of the supernaturalist or literalist view of the Bible that has gained ground with the rise of fundamentalism in recent decades. And since biblical scholarship ideally exists to serve the ends of preaching and tends to steer the direction of Christian homiletic endeavor, the Christian pulpit in the twentieth century has (outside the more fundamentalist circles) followed the lead of the Bible scholar:³⁵

The awareness that the healing stories could be viewed as secondary was also welcomed in pulpits and congregations by what almost seems a conspiracy of silence . . . There were more important matters to preach about . . . The parables and Jesus' ethical pronouncements were the vital core of his ministry.³⁶

This "conspiracy of silence" is confirmed by the evident lack of treatment of healing and miracle texts in the preaching books, including those "how-to" books for the preacher that treat by genre almost every other type of biblical text.

³⁵ C.K. Barrett, Biblical Problems and Biblical Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 32-33.

³⁶ Borsch, viii-ix.

Healing the Rift

It should be evident by now, however, that to divorce the healings from the vital core of Jesus' ministry and from an important place in the biblical message, does the Bible a grave injustice. In a sense the problem is more one of hermeneutics than of exegesis, as has been indicated. The development of a modern rationalistic mind-set that evaluates all experience according to the empirical scientific method has inadvertently short-changed both the biblical message and the human spiritual experience:

Although we might admit that there has been a resurgence of interest in the Bible in the last few years, there is no assurance . . . that preaching itself has been improved thereby. For it still remains painfully clear that how we use the Bible in preaching is determined largely by what we believe about the Bible.³⁷

The need, then, if we are to appropriate, preach and experience the message and faith of the Bible in its entirety, is not a simplistic return to an anti-rational supernaturalism or a biblical literalism. It is rather to allow our exegesis, our hermeneutic, in effect our world-view, to be contexted by our innate spirituality. There should be an on-going dialogue in which the Bible informs our faith and our spirituality, and our faith and spirituality address our understanding of the Bible. This should be not interpreted as license to play fast and loose with the Bible, either exegetically or hermeneutically. Rather it points to the need for greater serious interaction between a biblical view and our modern, more empirical view. It points to the

37 Sleeth, 31 (emphasis added).

need to allow our exegesis and hermeneutic to interact intelligently with our spirituality as well as our world-view during the process of appropriating the biblical message, instead of leaving faith and spirituality out of the process (or as at best relegating them to minor supporting roles), to be informed by the exegesis-hermeneutic-world-view triad after the fact, as seems to have been the general case in following a rationalistic approach to the Scriptures. There is some indication that the apostle Paul followed this approach on some occasions in his use of Scripture; Gal. 3:10-24 for example. In practice, what is suggested here may simply be a matter of subtle readjustment in our exegetical and hermeneutical method, rather than a change of methodology. It is a call (and by no means the first one) to understand and appropriate the Bible on its own terms and allow it to speak for itself to all levels of our experience.³⁸ Ancient and primitive though the biblical world-view may be for our scientific tastes, it can steer us moderns towards the examination of a whole range of spiritual experience that our scientific outlook has in the past prodded us to overlook or dismiss, experience perhaps best described and demonstrated by Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God.

There are evidences that this middle path between naturalism and supernaturalism is gaining ground, and that spiritual healing in the

³⁸ Some element of this approach seems to emerge in James Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), especially in the first and last chapters.

proclamation and practice of the Church is beginning to get its fair share of consideration. The ministry of physical healing by spiritual power, once the sole province of smaller denominations such as Christian Science, is growing in practice and acceptance.³⁹ The absolute finality of the long-standing mechanistic and naturalistic view of reality is being reassessed as the bounds of scientific knowledge are expanded with increasing rapidity, demonstrating that what was once viewed as objective scientific fact must now be seen more as a matter of perspective. Within this new framework the concept of miracle is also being re-evaluated and redefined:⁴⁰

A miracle in the biblical sense is an event which happens in a manner contrary to the regularly observed processes of nature. . . It may happen according to higher laws as yet but dimly discerned by scientists, and therefore must not be thought of as an irrational irruption of divine power into the realm of nature.⁴¹

Furthermore, the relation between health and salvation is being examined anew, and health and healing are being viewed as directly

39 Cf. Charlotte Saikowski and Richard Harley, "Christian Healing", The Christian Science Monitor, 13-16 March 1979. In addition, it should be noted that several of the more mainstream Protestant denominations have commissioned official studies of spiritual healing and its place in Christian ministry within the last 25 years.

40 For a favorable apology for miracles as scientifically plausible from a Christian physicist, see Werner Schaafs, Theology, Physics and Miracles, tr. Richard L. Renfield, (Washington D.C.: Canon Press, 1973).

41 Alan Richardson, in The New Book of Christian Quotations, Tony Castle, ed., (New York: Grossroad Publishing, 1982), quoted in The Christian Science Sentinel 87, May 23, 1985, 789.

42

involved in the salvatory process. While the major part of this re-examination is taking place in both religious and medical circles within the context of psychological and emotional health and existential salvation, nevertheless the renewed study of this relationship opens the door to broader possibilities in the future, and the concern over wholeness in salutary, and foretells the end of the old dualism that enabled the Church to turn its back on human physical needs. As a subset of this renewed inquiry, the emerging concern over the relation of human mind and body and mental roots of physical ills, is to be welcomed as an indication of the effort to look beyond the boundaries formerly enforced by a mechanistic "natural" view of the universe.⁴³

And finally, there are indications that within the framework of biblical studies there is room for exploration of a middle ground between rational existentialism and literal supernaturalism. C.K. Barrett, while acknowledging the tremendous debt owed to Bultmann by theology, biblical studies and homiletics, says of his demythologizing existential approach that

42 For a thorough review of the main literature in this field, see Lapsley, 46-85.

43 Cf. "Second Thought: Looking Again at News and Commentary," The Christian Science Sentinel 86 (April 9, 1984): 620-621 for a brief assessment of this trend.

. . . it is not the whole truth. We do no justice to the New Testament if we underestimate its concern for the "Jesus of History", or if we simply demythologize its eschatology into existentialism; and it is high time the problem were looked at again, not with a view to abandoning radical historical criticism for rigid conservatism, or to neglecting, in the interests of parrot-like orthodoxy, the obligation to restate Christian truth, but with the intention of allowing the New Testament to speak for itself and create its own response.⁴⁴

Concern for Christian healing in such a context has its rightful place in the current endeavor to "renew" biblical preaching, for as L.E. Keck indicates, truly biblical preaching must impart a Bible-shaped word in a Bible-like way.⁴⁵ Historical critical exegesis and a hermeneutic which attempts to fairly take into account both the biblical and the contemporary world views, and to develop a synthesis from what is best in each, will lead in this direction.

One thing is certain. The grass-roots revival of concern in the last two decades for the ministry of physical healing by spiritual means within the Church at large indicates that religious healing in all its aspects must once again be addressed from the pulpit. The Christian Church has a commission to proclaim the gospel and heal. If the words preached in the pulpit are to fulfill that commission, and to keep pace with the power of God experienced by Christians today in every facet of their lives, then homiletical attention must once again focus on healing.

44 Barrett, 18.

45 L.E. Keck, The Bible in the Pulpit: The Renewal of Biblical Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 106.

CHAPTER 4

Healing and the
Old TestamentAn Overview

Before homiletics can sow the seeds of healing from the pulpit, biblical scholarship must do the preliminary spadework in the study. That is the purpose of these next sections. And since much of the New Testament faith has its foundations in the Old Testament, it is there the investigation must begin.

The Israelites were not alone in the ancient Middle East in their turning to divine power for cure of physical ills. Dependence on deities for deliverance from all manner of calamities, including sickness, was a common trait of the ancient religious perspective, and was found in the religions of Canaan, Assyria, and Egypt.¹ A distinguishing feature for the Hebrew faith, however, was the notion of God's goodness:

A fundamental concept regarding the subject of health in the OT was the conviction that God is the Creator of life and thus the giver of health and well-being . . . health and well-being are the design of God . . . illness in whatever form it appears is not an established part of the divine order of reality.²

¹ Klaus Seybold and Ulrich Mueller, Sickness and Healing, tr. Douglas Stott, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 16-34.

² Gerhard F. Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," Andrews University Seminary Studies 21 (1983): 191.

Thus in the Old Testament, God alone is the one who heals, and healing is viewed as a part of His creative activity. This extension of absolute monotheism into the therapeutic arena is confirmed by the apparent absence of a medical profession in Israel.³

This may also be due in part to the Hebraic conceptions of health and sickness. These were not perceived in terms of mechanical or physical cause and effect - the principle behind the Greek notion of "kosmos" which bases the modern scientific perspective - but in terms of power. To the Hebrews the world was not an organic structure but rather a power structure, with God at the top of the structure and the dead at the bottom.⁴ In this framework sickness was seen as the invasion of death into the realm of life, and was regarded as one of the potentially chaotic concomitants of sin. Expression of this link is found particularly in the Psalms. (88:3-7; 116:3; 38:3,5,7,12; 13:3).⁵

Thus sickness was viewed as potential death, or death in a degree, and represented a breach between God the Creator and Giver of life and the human creature. This, and its connection with sin, invested it with a high degree of ritual or cultic connotations of impurity, so that illness (like other calamities) was seen as a punishment for sin:

3 D.C. Westermann, "Salvation and Healing in the Community; The Old Testament Understanding," International Review of Mission 61 (1972): 10-12.

4 M.A.H. Melinsky, Healing Miracles (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1968), 50.

5 H. Mowley, "Health and Salvation in the Old Testament," The Baptist Quarterly 22-23, July 1967, 103-108.

For the Israelite the seriousness of sickness lay not only in the pain or weakness involved, but also in the fact that a sick person was cut off by his sickness from his fellows, and cut off especially at that point where he longed most of all to be with his fellows - in the cult . . . we could then explain the separation from the sick man as separation from the sinner whose sin is revealed in and through his sickness. 6.

This prevailing view of sickness in the Old Testament is illustrated in the speeches of Job's friends, in the Levitical teaching of leprosy (Lev. 13-14), and in the Deuteronomical notion which came to dominate Judaism, that health and wealth are the rewards of God and signs of His favor, while sickness and calamity are the rewards of sin and signs of divine disfavor. That this was an outgrowth of the communal nature of the Israelite understanding of salvation and the corporate perception of human identity which pervaded Old Testament thinking is both natural and understandable; and this must have added an almost unbearable burden to the isolation and disdain experienced by those beset by illness in Israelite society.⁷

Yet this harsh Deuteronomic strand of thinking about sickness did not exist in isolation; it stood in direct contrast to the notion that health, wholeness and blessing were the divine intention and that God was a source of forgiveness and healing (Ps. 103, Hosea 11, 14).

6 Mowley, 101.

7 Lapsley, 32.

A secondary strand of thinking evolved in which healing (and its concomitant, forgiveness) was viewed as an encounter with God and a restoration of the relationship disrupted by the chaotic forces of sin, disease and death.⁸ This strand of theology is expressed in some of the Psalms, in the hopes and imagery of some of the prophetic writings (notably Isaiah), in the theological wrestlings of the book of Job, and in the accounts of healing work done by Moses and some of the prophets (Ex. 15:26; Num 12; the Elijah-Elisha cycles in 1 and 2 Kings; Pss. 6, 30, 41, 46, 62, 74, 103, 07, 116, 121, 147; Isa. 33, 35, 38, 42, 53, 61; Jer. 17; Hos. 11, 14; Zeph. 3:14-20; Mal. 4:2).

The interaction and conflict between these two perspectives on sickness and healing are dramatically illustrated in the book of Job. The speeches of Job's friends are clearly based on the dominant Deuteronomic notion of sickness as a punishment for sin, a punishment to be borne as God's will along with isolation from God and from the community because of sin. Job represents a protest against this doctrinal limitation on the love and power of God to heal, and sides with the Old Testament perception of health and wholeness as the ultimate will and intention of the Creator for His creatures. Job's friends separate healing from salvation, whereas Job rebels against this view of God, and finds his salvation in his healing encounter with the God who transcends human doctrine and speculation, the God that in creation expresses His intention for good (Jer. 29:11; Gen. 1:31; Job 38-42).⁹

In Job, as in the rest of this secondary strand

8 Kelsey, 41-45.

9 Westermann, 15-16.

of Old Testament thinking on sickness and healing, illness and suffering emerge clearly as opposed to the divine will and design, a perspective which found later development in the teaching and ministry of Jesus and in the experience of the early Church.

An Exegesis of Old Testament

Healing: 2 Kings 5

It has been noted that Jesus' work and self-perception apparently have clear ties and precedents in the Old Testament prophetic figures from Moses through the Classical Prophets, but particularly with regard to his healing work, in the ministry of the prophet Elisha.¹⁰ Therefore a closer examination of this portion of the Old Testament healing tradition may indicate a degree of connection between the Old Testament and New Testament thinking on healing.

The material concerning Elisha is found in 1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2-9:3 and 13:14-21. From this material the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 has been selected for consideration, since its religious and literary quality elevate it beyond the legendary folk-tale aura of some other portions of his ministry.¹¹ Also, of the healings and miracles in the accounts on Elisha, the healing of Naaman appears to have more of an air of historicity and less of hagiography than any of the other material.¹²

¹⁰ D.G. Bostock, "Jesus as the New Elisha," The Expository Times 92 (Nov 1980): 39-41.

¹¹ R.B.Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 71.

¹² John Gray, I and II Kings: A Commentary, 2nd ed., The Old Testament Library Series (London: SCM Press, 1970), 467-468.

The Text: Limits of the Unit

This uniqueness of the Naaman healing among the Elisha narratives causes it to stand out against the stories into which it has been placed. In its length and complexity it is also distinct from the many shorter, loosely strung together episodes of Elisha's ministry, particularly the two before it (4:38-41, 42-44) and the two immediately following it (6:1-7, 8-23). In content, too, the healing story is distinct. Alone of the prophetic stories, it concerns the healing of a leper (however, cf. Num. 12) and the worship of God by a non-Israelite; alone of the miracle stories in the cycle it presses beyond the healing to its moral and spiritual significance.¹³ In contrast to other portions of the Elisha narratives, politics play only a minor role in the story, even though the kings of both Syria and Israel figure in the plot and advance its development; the characters in the story serve to link the account to the rest of the Elisha history, but function independently here and are complete and understandable within the limits of the story itself without additional information from the other narratives. The last scene in the account, focusing on Elisha's servant Gehazi, links it to other stories in the Elisha narrative (4:8-37 and 8:1-6), but the character and role of Gehazi here are quite different from either of the other two stories.

¹³ Robert L. Cohn, "Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V," Vetus Testamentum 33 (1983): 171.

Further indication that 5:1-27 is a complete unit is given by the internal cohesiveness of the unit itself, with the main characters (Naaman, Elisha, and Gehazi) all interacting so as to tie the different scenes and plot changes together into a single cohesive story. Furthermore, the abrupt introduction of the new character Naaman in 5:1 sets the story off from what goes before in 4:42-44, and the abrupt change from Elisha and Gehazi in 5:27 to Elisha and "the sons of the prophets" in 6:1 (who play no part in the Naaman narrative) sets the story off from what follows (as the transition word "now" in the beginning of 6:1 in RSV additionally suggests; KJV and NIV also use a transitional or scene-changing "now" at the narrative's start in 5:1). Thus in literary quality and complexity, in internal cohesiveness and distinctness of content and by character and scene changes and linguistic clues at the start and end of the story, 5:1-27 shows itself to be a complete and independent unit.

The Text: Problems
and Variations

A comparison of several English translations and a check of the commentaries reveal no major textual problems with the unit. Therefore the translation as rendered in the RSV is acceptable. However, a few minor variations may be noted:

1. Verse 1 - Some manuscripts omit the phrase regarding Naaman that "he was a mighty man of valor."¹⁴ Even though its omission in no

¹⁴ J. Robinson, The Second Book of Kings (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 49.

way affects the facts of the account, its inclusion as in the RSV does serve to heighten the disparity between Naaman's goodness and his illness, in contrast to the prevailing Hebrew notions about sin and sickness. The Hebrew term for leprosy here is a broad term for a variety of skin ailments, and may indicate a disease which was neither considered contagious nor which would have disbarred him from society or high office.

2. Verse 3 - The Hebrew rendered "cure" (acaph) in the RSV is open to various shades of translation, and is found only here in the Old Testament with a personal object.¹⁵ It can mean to heal or cure, but also to rid, remove, cleanse, free or recover. It may be a variation of an Akkadian term connected with the practice of exorcism.¹⁶

3. Verse 7 - the king's question here may be translated "Am I God?" (as in RSV) or "Am I a god?" (as in NEB). Robinson makes it clear that the Hebrew can be understood either way, but that the RSV rendering is preferred, as this heightens the contrast between the king and the prophet and emphasizes that the power to heal is divine rather than human, a power exercised through prophetic rather than political channels.¹⁷ Gray notes that this view would run counter to the ancient and long-held notion of the divinity of kings and of royalty as the channel of healing and other divine blessings.¹⁸

15 Gray, 505.

16 James A. Montgomery, The Book of Kings, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 376.

17 Robinson, 53-54.

18 Gray, 505-506.

4. Verse 12 - The river named Abana in some manuscripts was corrected to read Amana by the Massoretes.¹⁹ If Abana is correct, it is the only mention of such a river in the Bible.²⁰ If Amana is correct, then both rivers mentioned in this verse correspond to contemporary rivers which flow into the marshes southeast of Damascus. Both were clean and clear in comparison to the muddy waters of the Jordan, a fact which along with Naaman's oversized and wounded pride may account for his comment in this verse.²¹

5. Verse 24 - The hill (~~ophel~~) in this verse is variously translated as the citadel, the tower or the mound, and its description has been somewhat of a puzzle.²² It may refer to the higher part of the city in which Elisha was then lodged, or to an actual hill upon which the city of Samaria was built.

19 Robinson, 54.

20 Gray, 507.

21 Montgomery, 375.

22 Montgomery, 377.

6. Verse 26 - The Hebrew of this verse is difficult to translate accurately. "Did I not go with you in spirit" in 26a is a paraphrase of the Hebrew to represent spiritual vision; the Hebrew reference is to the heart, rather than to the spirit per se.²³ The NEB rendering of 26b is based on an emendation of the Hebrew in some Greek versions, but it is inferior to the RSV translation in its emphasis on Gehazi's greed and in missing his dishonesty in the deceptive misrepresentation of Elisha whereby he obtained his booty. Cohn suggests that Elisha's exaggeration of Gehazi's crime stems from a formulaic list of possessions a despotic king may be expected to take from his people, thus linking the servant's crime to the excesses of royal corruption.²⁴

Genre and Style

The Elisha material in 2 Kings appears to be a compendium of anecdotes, "popular" legends and narratives.²⁵ However, to simply lump the Naaman healing in with these would do it a grave injustice, for it transcends much of the material that surrounds it. As von Rad asserts, this account goes beyond the category of "popular" story, told for enjoyment or hagiographic intent alone, into which much of the Elisha material may fall, for it obviously seeks to make a point or series of points.²⁶ And it is above the crude character of some of the Elisha anecdotes and resembles in quality, style, complexity, and language the more refined historical episodes of the Elijah

²³ Robinson, 56.

²⁴ Cohn, 182.

²⁵ G. Fohrer, History of the Israelite Religion, tr. D.E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 231.

²⁶ Gerhard von Rad, God at Work In Israel, tr. J.H. Marks (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 55.

material. Soggin notes that there is little evidence of redactional style or massaging in this account, and as it stands it seems to incorporate elements of prophetic legend, historical narrative, biography, miracle story and narrative dialogue, though its scope is encompassed by none of those classifications.²⁷ And though it is peppered with formulated theological creeds, neither is it sufficient to classify this narrative, as Cohn does, as didactic legend.²⁸ Therefore, perhaps the safest and most broadly accurate category as to genre for the Naaman healing is to call it an historical narrative, as Fohrer does, while noting that in function, style and content it bears some affinity to these other narrative classifications.²⁹ Gray also sees the Naaman account as stemming from a historical narrative source rather than from the popular saga source from which some of the other Elisha miracle material is derived.³⁰

Structure

Scholars have usually seen a two-part structure in 2 Kings 5, the division coming between verses 19 and 20 and separating the story of Naaman from the story of Gehazi. In fact, Gray has suggested at least in part on the basis of this separation that the healing of Naaman was originally a complete unit ending at verse 19, and that the story of Gehazi in verses 20 and 27 was a later expansion added on as a sequel

27 J.A. Soggin, Introduction to the Old Testament, tr. J. Bowden, The Old Testament Library Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 204.

28 Cohn, 183-184.

29 G. Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament, tr. D.E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 234.

30 Gray, 467.

of sorts.³¹ This is most probably the case, so that the healing of Naaman and his accompanying spiritual transformation may be viewed as a complete narrative in and of itself. But the Gehazi portion cannot stand on its own, as can the first 19 verses, so it becomes necessary to treat the chapter as a whole, as it has been left to us by the Deuteronomic redactors. And, as Cohn maintains, the dramatic rhythm and balance of the whole point to a single unit with three rather than two divisions.³² These divisions can be made on the basis of the character at the center of the dramatic energy of the narrative: Elisha (verses 1-14), Naaman (verses 15-19), and Gehazi (verses 20-27).

The first unit, by far the longest and most complex, introduces the problem of Naaman's illness in the first verse, and concludes with his healing in its last. The verses in between move very deliberately from problem to solution, and so center on Elisha, first as the goal of the plot (verses 1-7) and then as the fulcrum upon which the action hinges (verses 8-14). Thus the first unit, verses 1-14, may be subdivided into two sub-units of equal length.

Though this first unit ends with the physical healing of Naaman and seems to complete the action, the second unit extends the plot by

31 Gray, 502, 508

32 Cohn, 171-173. The structure which follows is largely adopted from the one set out in Cohn's article.

focusing on the accompanying spiritual transformation and conversion of Naaman. The implied spiritual transformation in verses 12-14 from arrogance and magical belief to humility and faith which accompanies the healing, sets the stage for the complete spiritual regeneration seen in 15-19. The physical regeneration in the first unit corresponds to and is extended and put into a living context by the spiritual regeneration in the second unit. Within the second unit Naaman's gratitude and confession, which cannot be manifested through a material offering (verses 15-16), are made manifest instead through his expression of humility and need of forgiveness (verses 17-18). It is noteworthy, as Cohn asserts, that Elisha's responses in this second unit are made intentionally brief by the author in contrast to Naaman's wordy confession and requests because this section focuses on Naaman and his transformation rather than on the prophet and his authority. Of importance also is his observation that Elisha refuses Naaman's offering because he takes no credit for the healing but emphasizes in his reply in verse 16 that the healing power belongs to God.³³ This is notable because it goes against the prophetic practice of the period. Naaman's grateful return to Elisha in verse 15 finds its dramatic fulfillment in his departure with Elisha's blessing, which rounds off the narrative with the closing of the second unit in verse 19.

The final unit, the sequel, sets the authority of Elisha in the

³³ Cohn, 175.

first unit and the transformation of Naaman in the second unit in greater relief by comparison to the servant Gehazi. The faith and fidelity of the prophet in verse 16 stand out by contrast to the servant's hardness of heart and self-seeking in verse 20 (and later in 23). Naaman's humility, charity and trust in verses 21 and 23 are contrasted to Gehazi's greed, bigotry and deceit in verses 20 and 22. Naaman proves himself a true and worthy servant in the second and third units of the story, while Gehazi is shown to be false and unworthy by comparison. Gehazi's blindness and spiritual insensitivity in attempting to hoodwink the prophet in verse 25 contrasts Elisha's spiritual perception in 26. Both Naaman and Gehazi stand before Elisha, but with drastically different results (verses 15 and 25); for Naaman, pride rebuked culminates in regeneration, while for Gehazi avarice uncovered opens the door to prophetic justice. This third unit further rounds off the first two (and the story as a whole; it begins with leprosy in verse 1 and ends with leprosy in verse 27) and serves to re-emphasize the action, character and ideas developed by the preceeding units. Thus, as the structure of the narrative demonstrates, what begins as a simple account of healing becomes by the narrative's end a study in spiritual reversals, similar in scope to the paradox Paul discusses in I Cor. 1:20-28.

Setting

The narrative of Naaman's healing has its literary setting within the Deuteronomic history which extends from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings. It is set within the four part history of the kings in the third portion, which describes the history of the two divided kingdoms down to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (I Kings 12-2

Kings 17).³⁴ More specifically, the Naaman account is set within a cycle of accounts about the prophet Elisha, his ministry, miracles, and dealings with the Syrians and the kings Jehoram and Jehu. Fohrer divides this material (2 Kings 2; 3:4-27; 4:1-8:15; 9:1-10; 13:14-21) into two strands, one strand linking the prophet with Gilgal and another comprised of individual narratives of diverse character; the Naaman narrative is part of this second strand.³⁵

The historical setting of the events in the narrative is difficult to place concisely, as neither the king of Syria nor the king of Israel that figure in the story is named. Fohrer has placed the event during the reign of Jehu (842-815 B.C.) on the basis of the prophet's apparent good relations with the Israelite king.³⁶ However, the evidence is by no means clear and conclusive; J.M. Miller pushes the entire ministry of Elisha out of Jehoram's reign and into the reigns of Jehu and Jehoahaz, during the time of Syrian oppression, which may explain the royal tension evident in 2 Kings 5:7.³⁷ All that may be safely said on the basis of the narrative is that the events described took place during the latter half of the ninth century in Samaria when relations between Israel and Syria were somewhat tense. This was a time of religious and cultural syncretism, when Israel's monotheistic faith mirrored the political instabilities surrounding it. Elijah,

34 The four-part division of 1 - 2 Kings is found in Soggin, 198.

35 Fohrer, History, 231.

36 Fohrer, History, 232.

37 J.M. Miller, "The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars", Journal of Biblical Literature 85 (1966): 454

Elisha and the members of the northern prophetic movement sought to stem the tide of syncretism and establish Israel as a nation for and under the one God. This was momentarily accomplished in the reign of Jehu, but was unable to survive the political turmoil and disintegration that followed in the eighth century.

The Naaman narrative probably has its original source in the northern prophetic traditions that exerted a strong influence on the Deuteronomic History and its view of prophecy and its ambivalent relation to the monarchy.³⁸ The Elisha portion of this tradition most likely originated among a prophetic group referred to in Kings as "the sons of the prophets," a peripheral outgrowth of the northern prophetic party founded perhaps by Elijah or Elisha, which resisted the political and religious policies of the Ephraimite kings and sought to bring about social change and restore religious orthodoxy through their ministries.³⁹ Von Rad pictures them as religious hermits of sorts who nevertheless commanded some respect in the Israelite culture.⁴⁰ These traditions were incorporated at some point in the complex compilation of the Deuteronomic History, and reached their final narrative form in the first half of the sixth century B.C., probably after the fall of Jerusalem.⁴¹ Thus the original setting of the account would have been within the peripheral prophetic community of the ninth century; the final setting would

³⁸ R.R. Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 17.

³⁹ Wilson, 202.

⁴⁰ von Rad, 47-48.

⁴¹ For a complete discussion of the sources, compilation and redaction (or redactions) of Kings, see O. Kaiser, Introduction to the Old Testament, tr. J. Sturdy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 164-168.

have been the Exilic Palestinian community of the sixth century.

There is some degree of affinity between these two settings. Both audiences represent a minority or out-group status, struggling to come to grips with their recent history and subsequent position in light of their perception of the sovereignty and will of an omnipotent God. Both audiences are enduring political and social upheaval and trying to understand it, explain it, and find some refuge from the storm in their faith. Both groups are struggling for the survival of their religious faith and practices in a context of religious syncretism and abuse accompanying the political turmoil.⁴² It is in such a context that the challenging and comforting message of Naaman's healing was heard.

Issues and Theology

Contrary to the view commonly expressed that the Naaman healing and other miracles of Elisha are mere hagiographic legends intended to enhance the status of Elisha and magnify his magical powers, it seems evident that the issues involved in the Naaman narrative are much

⁴² For a fuller discussion of the ninth-century peripheral prophetic community and its situation, see Wilson, 192-212. For a discussion of the situation of the Exilic Palestinian community see Fohrer, History, 307-310.

broader.⁴³ The central concern seems to be the enhancement and description of the power and authority of God rather than the power and authority of Elisha, which appears reasonable in light of the syncretistic and pagan influences pressing Hebrew monotheism in both the original and transmitted historical situations of the account.⁴⁴ Throughout the narrative, from the words of the Israelite slave girl to the spiritual perception by the prophet of his servant's deceit, God is the unseen mover, the orchestrating and motivating power that determines the course of action. This central theological motif is expressed unequivocally in 5:7, 10-11, 15-16. Around this central theological assertion revolve several related issues or sub-themes:

1. The reinforcing of the prophetic institution - as Long notes, in a time of religious turmoil and degeneration, when the prophetic word and practice were disregarded or in conflict with the social tendencies of the day, or when great prophets were regarded as a thing of the past and God now seemed silent or impotent, such narratives reinforced the prophetic institution as God's means of addressing, healing and guiding His people.⁴⁵ 5:3, 8-10, 19 and the contrast between noble Elisha and self-seeking Gehazi in verses 20-27 speak to this issue.

2. The concern over magic and distinction between pagan magical practices and God's healing power - Fohrer notes that the magical

43 For a summation of this hagiographic view, see B.C. Long, "The Social Setting for Prophetic Miracle Stories," Semeia 3 (1975):46-49.

44 H.K. Beebe, The Old Testament (Belmont: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1970), 169-170.

45 Long, 46, 50, 52, 56-58.

practices of Canaanite religion were a constant temptation, particularly in light of the apparent failure of God to rescue His covenant people from destruction.⁴⁶ 5:10-12 includes reference to magical exorcism practices which may have been in use in the ancient Near East in competition with prophetic religious healing.⁴⁷ The focus on spiritual transformation and encounter with God in 5:13-19 further distinguishes prophetic healing from the manipulative superstitions of magical exorcism.

3. The proper stance with regard to foreigners - by having Naaman, a foreigner and enemy to Israel, approach Elisha for healing and come away not only healed but converted, the narrative reinforces the notion that God is God for all the world, and is not to be confined to the status of a national deity. In this positive attitude to foreigners, as well as in its opposition to the Deuteronomic formula of health equals divine favor, sickness equals divine disfavor, the Naaman narrative stands in opposition to its Deuteronomic context.⁴⁸ Miller, among others, has noted the contradictory stance of the Elisha material in many instances with regard to the Deuteronomic history and theology. This may account for the later addition of the Gehazi verses by a Deuteronomic redactor as a sequel in part to tone down this theological contradiction.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Fohrer, History, 309-310.

⁴⁷ Theodor H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969), 519-520.

⁴⁸ Robinson, 52.

⁴⁹ Miller, 450-451.

4. The contrast between prophetic and royal authority and the impotence of official over divine channels - paradoxically this motif, unlike the previous one, is in accord with the Deuteronomic theology in its ambivalence about the monarchy and the political history of the nation (which confirms the perception of the Naaman narrative as a whole as a study in reversals). This point emerges clearly in the comedy of errors in 5:5-8.

5. The meaning of covenant faith and the cost of faithlessness - this motif dominates the sequel concerning Gehazi in verses 20-27. In keeping with its noted didactic character, the narrative here condemns the greed that leads to violation of the Mosaic laws, and in its contrast between Naaman and Gehazi shows there is more to covenant faith than simple membership in the covenant community.

These sub-themes support the primary motif of God's power and authority in the Naaman narrative, which shows the narrative to be in overall keeping with the aim of the author of Kings, which is to defend his faith and vindicate his God. ⁵⁰

Interpretation and

Homiletical Possibilities

As the issues mentioned may indicate, the Naaman healing is a rather lengthy and complex text, which therefore holds an abundance of homiletical difficulty and promise. The possibilities for its treatment which would make it more manageable without doing violence to its general thrust would be: (1) a homiletical series with one

⁵⁰ Robinson, 9.

sermon on each unit of the text (1-14, 15-19, and 20-27), or (2) a sermon treating the first 19 verses as an entire pericope, leaving off the Gehazi sequel. Within either format the central thrust of the text, that God is the only power, the sovereign God of all nations, and that God alone heals, can come to the forefront. In light of the assaults on Christian monotheistic faith and the unity of humanity inherent in the materialism, political and technological idolatry, economic and social divisions, and the rapid pace of change in contemporary society, this gospel of God in charge and at work for health, unity and wholeness is a needed and welcome message.

While homiletical entry to the text may be made via any one of the issues or motifs involved in the narrative, the primary approach for this study ought to be the text's concern for the nature, uniqueness and power of divine healing.⁵¹ In this approach the expositional focus would be on the distinction between God's healing power and pagan magical practices (Issue 2 in the preceding subsection). In interpreting this issue for a contemporary setting the emphasis falls on the distinguishing encounter-with-God and spiritual transformation aspects associated with religious healing, which may not be present in other therapeutic and self-help approaches of today. The text suggests that spiritual healing is part of a total lifestyle of faith and relation to God, and not simply an alternative health-care system for treating physical ills. This aspect of the text also suggests consideration of the relationship of mental and spiritual factors to

51 For a different interpretive approach to the text, see J. Ellul, The Politics of God and the Politics of Man, tr. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 23-40.

physical well-being and wholeness, a topic of contemporary concern. Within this framework the Gehazi portion of the narrative may also be considered in the context of mental cause and effect (as in Gal. 6:7,8). The issue of the dominant Deuteronomic view of illness as divine punishment, mentioned in the overview at the beginning of this section, (which was also a prevailing ecclesiastical view for centuries) deserves scrutiny in this connection, as does the Old Testament faith-assertion made at the outset that God as the good author of existence is the one true healer, and illness and calamity are not an ordained part of His divine design.

Perhaps a part of the Old Testament world-view which can be reclaimed in the consideration of this text is the view of existence as in some sense a power structure rather than an exclusively mechanical structure. The notion of power, what it is and who has it, is implicit throughout this narrative, as some of the other sub-themes indicate. Not that the Hebrew notion should be reclaimed in its entirety along with its mythological geographic and eschatological structures, or that the Greek mechanical view should be entirely given up for it. Howard Clark Kee makes clear the importance of appropriating the biblical theological perspective while not uncritically accepting the biblical prescientific picture of the world. But perhaps, especially in light of contemporary political and psychological attention on power relationships and the manipulation of power and people, a call for renewed attention on power in the structural biblical theological perspective while not uncritically accepting

the biblical prescientific picture of the world.⁵² But perhaps, especially in light of contemporary political and psychological attention on power relationships and the manipulation of power and people, a call for renewed attention on power in the structuring of being of existence, as a metaphysical counterbalance or contexting agency to the mechanistic views of our scientific society, is not at all off-track.

52 Howard Clark Kee, Jesus and God's New People (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 17-19.

CHAPTER 5

Healing and the New Testament

Overview and OldTestament Connections

The beginnings of a broad survey of New Testament healing were included in the first section of this study.¹ However, since little attention was given there to either the Gospel narratives (which provide the foundations for the view of Christianity's founder as a healer) or to the New Testament perception of healing in relation to the Old, further preliminary consideration of the New Testament backgrounds for healing seems warranted.

In the New Testament, the Old Testament view of existence as a power structure still provides the basic foundation, especially with regard to healing as a divine activity. The primary word for miracle activity (including healing) in the Synoptic Gospels is the Greek word for power (*dunamis*), an indication that such activity in the New Testament fits into the Hebrew world-view.² The New Testament echoes the Old in its assertion that God is the source of all power and is known not so much by His being as by His self-revealing action. The biblical God is a God of power and action as compared to the later deistic notion of a God who set up the rules of the universe once upon a time and then let things run mechanistically along their course. The biblical God appears in both Testaments as a God of involvement, action and power, a God who heals in keeping with His intentions for

1 See pp. 12-17.

2 Melinsky. 19.

creation. For the New Testament writers Christ is this power of God in action.³

The linking of sickness and calamity to sin which dominates Old Testament thinking is continued in the New Testament, although as noted it appears that Jesus set himself against this link as divinely ordained, and stood firmly within the secondary strand of Old Testament thinking which emphasized God's goodness and His intention to save and forgive rather than punish and destroy. He evidently did not deny that sin could lead to sickness, but neither did he leave the matter there.⁴ Instead Jesus saw both sin and sickness as opposed to the will of God, as manifestations of death or separation from God, and by his healing demonstrated that the power of God to heal was stronger than the power of sin or sickness to kill and separate from God (John 9:1-7).

A new factor in the view of sickness and healing that came to dominate Hebrew thinking after the Exile was the notion of demons and evil spirits as causes of illness, in addition to sin. This began under the dualistic influence of Babylonian Zoroastrianism, and though it gave the Jews a way to cope with their exile and oppression, it did so at the cost of their monotheistic faith in an omnipotent God:

³ Alan Richardson, The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels (London: SCM Press, 1941), 16.

⁴ Seybold and Mueller, 126-127.

. . . after the Exile Judaism radically altered its world view, suffering from a failure of nerve. The Jews had experienced a succession of foreign overlords. Prophecy had ceased. Miracles had ceased. What was God doing to allow his chosen people to be so ground down? Had he ceased to love them? Or was he not in final control? They could not give up faith in their election, but they did give up strict belief in Yahweh's sovereignty. So Satan and his fellow spirits 'fell' . . . to being evil demons setting up a rival kingdom of their own.⁵

In this view the forces of death and darkness at the bottom of the Old Testament power-structure became allied to the power of Satan, and became the power behind all the sin, disease, death, suffering and individual and national misfortune in the world. The world became the battleground for the forces of God and the forces of Satan, and in its most radical expressions this view pessimistically saw the world totally enslaved by the power of death and darkness.

Within this framework, out of the ashes of Israel's prophetic hopes and visions emerged an apocalyptic eschatology which pinned hope not on the here and now but on the Age to Come, the Messianic Age of the kingdom of God, when God would send a Redeemer to lead His people out of their political and spiritual bondage. "One like the prophet Moses" would emerge to lead this second and final Exodus to a kingdom of blessing, where sickness, injustice and all oppression by the forces of death and Satan would end and the presence and sovereignty of God would be everyday experiences. The activity of God's Spirit, prominent in the bygone days of the prophets, would be re-inaugurated for all of God's people (Isa. 60-66; Jer. 33; Ezek. 36, 37; Joel 2,3; Micah 4,5; Zeph. 1,3; Zech. 9,14; Mal. 4).

5 Melinsky, 13.

The ministry of Jesus emerged within this apocalyptic context, and the Gospels seem to indicate that Jesus was perceived to fulfill this eschatological prophetic role. This was especially true of his healing activity, which is linked in the Gospels to the Old Testament prophetic heritage and particularly to the peaks of the prophetic role in Moses, Elijah and Elisha.⁶ And, as has been indicated, evidently not only the early Church but also Jesus himself saw especially in his healing ministry the overcoming of the forces of death and darkness which seem to oppose God's government of His creation and to separate humanity from God. In this apocalyptic victory over individual instances of evil and its resultant suffering, Jesus and the early Church perceived the eschatological dawning of the New Age, the Messianic era of the kingdom of God.⁷ Healing was thus not a mere sign or symbol of God's kingdom come and His authority and power recognized, but was in fact itself the coming of God's kingdom on earth, God's power experienced and His authority recognized as valid over the whole range of human experience.⁸

This affirmation of healing as an individual instance of divine salvation of eschatological importance stood in opposition to the widespread Near Eastern and Hellenistic practices of magic as a system for healing. In this regard the New Testament continues the

6. D. Juel, J. Ackerman, T. Warshaw, An Introduction to New Testament Literature, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 121-136.

7 For a further discussion of the relation between healing and the apocalyptic kingdom of God, cf. Howard Clark Kee, Miracle in the Early Christian World (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 146-170, 200-205.

8 Melinsky, 19-24.

opposition to magic that is found in the Old Testament, and places the authority and power for healing solely with God. The Gospels and first-century Talmudic sources illustrate this controversy. They indicate that the ability of Jesus and his followers to heal was not questioned, but only the authority by which they did heal. Their healing ability was variously attributed to the power of demons or to magical rituals, and this controversy over the authority for healing was certainly one of the reasons for opposition to Jesus and for his crucifixion, as well as a justification for persecution of his followers. Parker makes clear that first-century Talmudic sources accuse Jesus and his followers of practicing magic, and link this charge to his crucifixion.⁹ Scholars seem divided on the relation of Hellenistic magic to New Testament healing, but although there is evidence of some superficial similarities between the two, on the whole it remains clear that Jesus was a healer of the Old Testament prophetic type rather than a magician, and that the New Testament continues the monotheistic opposition to magic found in the Old Testament. The keynote in New Testament healing, as in the Old Testament, is divine power rather than human manipulation. Referring to the New Testament miracles, Richardson states: "We are moving, not in the atmosphere of Hellenistic magic, but in the wholly opposed thought-world of the Bible," and then he goes on to distinguish them from the "secular wonders" of Hellenistic magic, divine men and Jewish exorcists on the basis of the connection of New Testament healings to

⁹ Parker, 144-145.

the dawning eschatological kingdom of God.¹⁰ The motive for New Testament healing is soteriological; it is the dawning awareness of the kingdom, authority and power of God in human experience rather than the self-aggrandizement, ritualism and anthropocentric thirst for power and control frequently associated with magic or with the Hellenistic heroes. With this in mind, the reserve surrounding the healings in the Gospels is quite noteworthy, and shows the vast distance between the New Testament practice of spiritual healing and the practices of Hellenistic magicians, wonder-workers and heroes.¹¹

A thorough assessment of the place and function of the healings in the Gospels is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say, broadly speaking, that in all four Gospels the healings operate within the framework that has been described. Within this framework each Gospel writer has noticeably different concerns: Mark tends to emphasize the apocalyptic nature of the healings; Matthew focuses on the Old Testament prophecies and prophetic role fulfilled by Jesus' healing and activity; Luke uses the healings and the miraculous element in Jesus' life (and in the lives of the Apostles in Acts) to frame and shape his Gospel and to place Jesus' work within the history of the divine plan for the Church and the world's salvation; John accords the least space of all the Gospels to healings, and stresses their spiritual impact, revelatory nature and controversial relation

10 Richardson, 54. For an opposing viewpoint, cf. M. Smith, Jesus the Magician (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), and J.M. Hull, Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition (London: SCM Press, 1974). A succinct and biting dismissal of their arguments may be found in Kee, Miracle, 211-212 n. 69.

11 Melinsky, 32-34.

to faith.¹² To do justice to the healings, each should be considered on its own in its context within each Gospel. Yet it is fair to say that, although there is a thematic variety in the healings in the Gospels, they all provide a picture of a Savior whose understanding of salvation and of God's sovereignty included divine power to save humanity from sickness and suffering and death as well as from sin. And all four Gospels provide in the healings they record a model for the ministry of Christ's Church and a blueprint for the living practice of Christianity.

An Exegesis of New Testament

Healing: Luke 7:1-10

Of the 26 healings in the four Gospels, Luke, the longest of the four, records the greatest number, 17.¹³ It is evident therefore that Luke is especially concerned with Jesus as a healer. It is apparent that in Luke a concerted effort has been made to balance Jesus' healing activity with his preaching and teaching work so as to give them equal standing in his ministry (a balance which this study argues belongs also in the Church's ministry), whereas in the other Gospels the emphasis is clearly on Jesus' teaching.¹⁴ And in Luke the connection between Jesus and Elisha is made clear, moreso even than in Matthew's Gospel, where Moses is the Old Testament prophetic

¹² Detailed discussions of the place of the healings in each of the four Gospels may be found in Kee, Miracle, 146-241.

¹³ John Wilkinson, "A Study of Healing in the Gospel According to John", Scottish Journal of Theology 20 (1967): 442.

¹⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, "The Lucan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch," Journal of Biblical Literature 94 (1975): 550-551.

forerunner to Jesus.¹⁵ Luke also apparently sees and emphasizes the connection between preaching, healing and salvation.¹⁶ As a New Testament follow-on to the exegesis of 2 Kings, then, a healing from Luke's Gospel seems appropriate. The Old Testament healing of Naaman has often been linked to the healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), or to the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-9) or the man born blind (John 9). While these connections are quite plausible, the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10) offers a rich and little-studied interplay of similarity and contrast between the Old Testament and New Testament healings. The healing of the centurion's servant will be examined only in its Lucan setting (rather than including Matthew's version) for three reasons: (1) for the sake of clarity and brevity; (2) since the exegetical concern here is homiletical exposition, which normally treats a single text; and (3) since Luke makes a more explicit tie between Jesus and Elisha than does Matthew, and so may have had Elisha's healing of Naaman in mind when including the healing of the centurion's servant.¹⁷ Having noted then that Matthew includes a different version of this healing in his Gospel in a different context with a somewhat different emphasis than Luke's, consideration will now

15 T.L. Brodie, "Luke 7: 36-50 as an Internalization of 2 Kings 4: 1-37: A Study in Luke's Use of Rhetorical Imitation," Biblica 64 (1983): 465, 484.

16 Allen, 27-28.

17 J.D.M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: The Syro-Phoenician Woman and the Centurion of Capernaum," Novum Testamentum 15, (1973): 174.

be given to Luke's account.

The Text: Limits of the Unit

The healing of the centurion's servant is a complete account in and of itself, and is distinct from what comes before it and after it in Luke's Gospel. Immediately before it is the didactic section known as the Sermon on the Plain (6: 17-49), which is noticeably different from the narrative which begins in chapter 7. Immediately after the healing of the centurion's servant is another healing account, but except for Jesus, the cast of characters is entirely different. The two narratives in 7:1-17 come to Luke from different sources (the centurion's servant from Q and the widow's son from Luke's special material) which further indicates their distinctness from each other.¹⁸

In addition, the changes in geography and accompanying scene-changing verses added by Luke indicate the completeness and distinctness of 7:1-10. In verse 1 Luke signals the end of Jesus' sermon on the plain and shifts the scene to Capernaum. Then in verse 11, at the start of the healing of the widow's son, Luke indicates a shift again in time ("soon afterwards" or "the next day") and in location (from Capernaum to Nain). Finally, structurally the account of the centurion's servant comprises a unit with an introduction, problem (including dialogue) and resolution (in verse 10), which also suggests its completeness as a pericope.

¹⁸ J.A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28 (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 648, 656.

The Text: Problems
and Variations

A comparison of several English translations of the text and of several commentaries shows no textual problems. Therefore the RSV rendering is acceptable. The following verses, however, require textual comment:

1. Verse 2 - RSV notes that the Greek describing the slave as "dear" (entimos) to the centurion can also mean "valuable" or "highly prized," emphasizing the servant's status and worth as part of the centurion's household property. However, as Marshall notes, the rest of the narrative argues for an interpretation which stresses the centurion's obvious respect and affection for his servant rather than his concern over the possible loss of a piece of property.¹⁹

2. Verse 7 - Luke has the centurion refer to the slave here as pais, literally "boy," rather than as doulos or "servant," the term Luke uses in the rest of the narrative. The term here is one of obvious affection, and reinforces the notion suggested in verse 2 of the centurion's regard for his servant. The term was synonymous with servant in the Hellenistic world, and is so used in Matthew's account of the healing.²⁰ Bultmann's view that pais refers to a child in both Matthew's and Luke's version is that doulos in Luke 7:2 is "an error in reproduction," is highly questionable.²¹ Connections

¹⁹ I.H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1978), 279.

²⁰ Fitzmyer, 651.

²¹ Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, tr. J. Marsh (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), 38.

between this account and the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-53) on this basis or on the basis of the location of the healing and the man's official status are tenuous.²²

3. Verse 7 - The passive imperative "let him be healed" in the RSV rendering may also be translated in the passive future, "he will be healed." As Fitzmyer notes, there is little difference in meaning, and either way the phrase reflects the certainty of the centurion's faith in the result of his request to Jesus.²³

Form and Style

Bultmann discounts the healing element in the verses in favor of the didactic function of the dialogue, and so classifies this text as a biographical apophthegm rather than a miracle story.²⁴ Fitzmyer follows a similar path and labels the episode a "pronouncement-story," with its focus on the challenge to faith in verse 9 rather than on the remarkable absent cure reported in verse 10.²⁵ Dibelius also focuses on the saying in verse 9, which he views as the conclusion of the original narrative, and so classifies the account as a didactic paradigm.²⁶

However, such classifications, while accurately locating the point or intent of the narrative, forget that the text is primarily a narrative in which the point or saying is anchored by the healing. The need for healing, request for healing and the healing result are

22 L. Morris, The Gospel according to St. Luke (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1974, 135.

23 Fitzmyer, 652.

24 Bultmann, History, 38-39.

25 Fitzmyer, 649, 653.

26 M. Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), 56, 244-245, 261.

the fulcrum upon which the entire unit rests. Even when the healing is in the background, subordinated to the other concerns in the text, it is still an integral element in the dramatic movement and tension of the narrative. The story cannot function without it.

Kee is correct in emphasizing the narrative nature of the account, while noting the predominance of the sayings genre in the Q material from which the story comes.²⁷ And the narrative in its present form does contain all the elements normally associated with the healing miracle story genre: problem (verses 2-3), healing resolution (implied or inherent in verses 7-9) and proof (verse 10). Therefore the healing of the centurion's servant must be classified as a healing miracle story rather than as a saying in a story context.

Within the overall genre of healing miracle story the text may be classified by characters and dialogue or interaction. R.W. Funk includes the healing of the centurion's servant within the subclassification of stories where a representative of the patient approaches the healer, thus grouping it with the stories of the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:24-30), Jairus (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43), the Capernaum official (John 4:46-54),²⁸ the Epileptic's father (Mark 9:14-29), and Dorcas (Acts 9:36-42). A.C. Wire subdivides the classification

²⁷ Howard C. Kee, Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels, 2nd edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 81.

²⁸ R.W. Funk, "The Form of the New Testament Healing Miracle Story", Semeia 12 (1978): 81, 89.

based on the type of dialogue or interaction involved, and lists four categories: the exorcism, the expose, the provision and the demand. The fourth group, the demand healing narrative, is the largest subcategory, and always involves a request for healing and the overcoming of some form of obstacle or opposition. In placing the story of the centurion's servant in this category, Wire considers the distance between patient and healer the obstacle which intensifies the demand for healing, underlies the dialogue and prompts the centurion's faith statement about authority.²⁹ Thus the healing of the centurion's servant may be placed in the broad healing miracle story category, and further classified as a demand-type of healing where the demand for healing comes from a representative of the patient.

In style the account is typical of the Septuagint Greek employed by Luke alternately with pure, literary Greek throughout his two-volume work.³⁰ The Hebraistic diction seems to be a conscious literary device throughout the Gospel to reflect the Jewish setting of the stories, but in this case may also reflect the Semitising influence of the Q source from which this narrative derives. In either case the grammatical style bears a distinct Hebraic stamp.

The account also reflects typical Lucan style in the apparent literary quality and eye for dramatic detail evident in the account, especially compared to Matthew's version. Bultmann notes the literary

29 A.C. Wire, "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and their Tellers," Semeia 11 (1978): 83, 99-102.

30 N. Geldenhuys, A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1951), 36-37.

novel-like character of this narrative, especially in the detailed description of the centurion.³¹ While it is possible that Luke has expanded the account he found in Q, it is just as likely (and in keeping with his usual treatment of miracle narratives) that Matthew has telescoped his narrative, thus preserving a shorter and simpler version of the healing.³²

Structure

Funk maintains that all New Testament healing miracle stories include dialogue and a healing, and that stories of the type where a representative approaches the healer normally include a protest or objection.³³ This is what Wire refers to as the intensifier of the demand for healing or the obstacle to healing.³⁴ Further, Funk sees the structural pattern of the narratives revolving around this request-response-protest-response cycle, and sees three scenes in the healing of the centurion's servant.³⁵ With these elements in mind, along with the overall problem-resolution-proof structure of New Testament healing narratives, the pericope may be outlined as follows. The outline follows Funk's overall perception of healing narratives as requiring an introduction, at least one nucleus of dialogue, and a conclusion. However, within that framework the structural outline is original.

31 Bultmann, History, 68-69.

32 Marshall, 277-278.

33 Funk, 70, 75-76.

34 Wire, 101-102.

35 Funk, 76, 80.

The Centurion's Servant

Introduction - Problem Stated

- 1 a. After he had ended all his sayings
b. he entered into Capernaum.
- 2 a. There a centurion had a slave who was dear,
b. who was sick and at the point of death. (Problem)
- 3 a. He heard of Jesus,
b. sent elders of the Jews
c. asking him to come and heal his slave. (Request for healing by the patient's representative)

Nucleus (3 scenes) - Resolution Implied

Scene I

- 4 a. They came to Jesus,
b. and besought him earnestly, saying,
c. "He is worthy to have you do this
- 5 a. for he loves our nation
b. and built our synagogue." (Rationale for request)
- 6 a. Jesus went with them (Response to request - intention to heal initiated/implied)

Scene II

- 6 b. Not far from the house,
c. the centurion sent friends, saying,
d. "Lord, do not trouble yourself,
e. for I am not worthy to have you under my roof.
- 7 a. Therefore I did not presume to come to you.
b. But say the word,
c. and let my servant be healed. (Protest - the intensifying factor of distance introduced into the request)
- 8 a. for I also am a man under authority
b. with soldiers under me:
c. and I say to one, "go," and he goes;
d. and to another, "come," and he comes;
e. and to my slave, "do this," and he does it." (Rationale for protest)

Scene III

- 9 a. When Jesus heard this he marveled,
b. and turned and said to the multitude,
c. "Not even in Israel have I found such faith." (Response to protest - Healing Resolution initiated/implied)

Conclusion - Proof Stated

- 10 a. When those who had been sent returned,
 b. they found the slave well. (Proof of Healing)

Within this outline the request-rationale-response/protest-rational-response structure of the narrative is apparent, and the contrast between the two cycles is noteworthy. The request and response in verses 3-6a seem to hinge on the rationale of the centurion's worthiness, which receives its authority from his actions on behalf of the community. But the protest and response in verses 6b - 9 hinge by contrast on the centurion's self-perceived unworthiness, which he bases on his recognition of Jesus' spiritual authority, and on the faith Jesus perceives behind that recognition. Thus, as in the Naaman narrative, there is within this healing narrative a dramatic reversal of the normal perception of things which emerges in comparing the very different rationales in the dialogue in verses 4-5 and 6-8. The rationale of worthiness and status is supplanted by the rationale of unworthiness and spiritual authority in a dramatic demonstration of the distance between the human and divine criteria as stated in 1 Samuel 16:7.

Setting and Issues

The narrative of the centurion's servant has its literary setting in the three-part salvation history of Luke-Acts in the second era of that history, the "center of history" which Luke associates with Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God to Israel in word and act (Luke 3:22-24:51).³⁶ More specifically, it is part of the Q material

³⁶ For the three-part salvation history structure of Luke-Acts, see Hans Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke, tr. G. Buswell (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 15-17.

in the second section of Luke's five-part Gospel (4:14-9:50) which runs from 6:20-7:10 and 7:18-35, and is the only narrative in the whole of Q.³⁷ Together with the raising of the widow's son at Nain in 7:11-17 it is placed right after the teaching material of the Sermon on the Plain in keeping with Luke's intention to balance Jesus' healing and teaching so as to give them an equal footing in his ministry as Messiah.³⁸ In this context the healing and teaching of Jesus fulfill Luke's programmatic outline of Jesus' activity in 4:16-22, and the healing in 7:1-10 specifically demonstrates Luke's programmatic statement about Israel's rejection of the prophetic line (of which the Messiah is the culmination) in 4:24-30. Additionally, the two healings in 7:1-17 make the transition from Jesus' self-revelation in word in 6:20-49 to the question of his revelation as Messiah in deed, posed by John in 7:18-23, and from there to the Q teaching on John's prophetic relation to Jesus in 7:24-35. In the context of the code of conduct for those who belong to the kingdom of God given in 6:20-49, the narrative of the centurion's servant serves as a dramatic example of Jesus' declaration in 8:21 that his true relatives are the ones who obey God. The narrative reflects the view that runs throughout 6:20-8:39 that the true Israel of the messianic kingdom is not a matter of political boundaries or ethnic origins.

The historical setting of the events in the narrative is within the ministry of Jesus prior to his entry into Jerusalem and subsequent

37 Norman Perrin, The New Testament: An Introduction, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974) 74-75. On the five-part structure of Luke's Gospel, see 206-212

38 Achtemeier, 550-551.

crucifixion, and cannot be dated more precisely than the second quarter of the first century A.D.; Kummel maintains the historicity of this particular narrative as an actual event in the ministry of Jesus.³⁹

Luke sets it in the Galilean portion of Jesus' travels, in Capernaum, a prosperous fishing port and trade-route stop on the Sea of Galilee. The city was Jesus' home base for his ministry, and was the setting for many of his healings, perhaps because of the relative religious spirituality, simplicity and laxity and the dynamic religious outlook characteristic of residents of the Galilean region.⁴⁰

In such a setting Jesus' preaching and demonstration of the presence of the kingdom of God would have found the wide and mixed reception recorded in the Gospels.

The narrative of the centurion's servant had its original source in the traditions behind Q, which has been dated prior to Mark's Gospel, about 50 A.D.⁴¹ The Q traditions had their origins in the actual preaching and life of Jesus himself, yet bear the stamp of a specific Christian community with specific concerns.⁴² Kee describes the community as one that

stood firmly in the tradition of charismatic prophets, with a keen expectation of impending judgment and eschatological vindication . . . The view of the world that prevailed was sharply dualistic: the powers of Satan were already in process of being overcome by the power at work in Jesus and transmitted by him to his faithful followers. Healings and exorcisms were signs that the era dominated by the devil was

39 W.G. Kummel, The Theology of the New Testament, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 60.

40 D.C. Pellet, "Capernaum," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 533-534.

41 Kee, Jesus in History, 83.

42 Reginald H. Fuller, Interpreting the Miracles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 47.

coming to an end and that the New Age was dawning. The religious leadership of Judaism was regarded as hypocritical and nitpicking, as exclusive in its attitude toward Gentiles and nonconforming Jews, and as hostile toward Jesus and his followers. The Q community, following Jesus' example, was lax in observation of the Law, open and hospitable toward Gentiles, and ready to accept even martyrdom at the hands of the authorities, confident that God would vindicate the faithful in the End Time.

As a community of self-perceived prophetic messengers, sent to call Israel to repentance in view of the dawning kingdom of God, yet experiencing rejection, the Q community found in the Deuteronomic history of Israel's disobedience and rejection of the prophets the theological vehicle with which to understand the Jewish rejection of the Christian message.⁴⁴ This, and the elements of a Hasidic-Wisdom-prophetic reform movement evident in Q, lend weight to the argument that Q is of Palestinian rather than Syrian origin.⁴⁵ The similarities between the Q community and the northern prophetic community in which the Naaman narrative arose are also noteworthy in this regard, and may suggest geographic as well as theological proximity. In this context the healing of the centurion's servant stands squarely within Q's eschatological emphasis on the impenitence

⁴³ Kee, Jesus in History, 118.

⁴⁴ A.D. Jacobson, "The Literary Unity of Q," Journal of Biblical Literature 101 (1982): 383-388.

⁴⁵ Kee, Jesus in History, 118.

of Israel and the consequences of rejecting God's prophets. It reflects also the community's concern with the success of the ongoing Gentile mission and the subsequent inclusion of Gentiles in Christian communities which necessitated the redefinition of Israel as God's chosen and who was to be included in God's people. The healing of the centurion's servant displayed the two-edged thrust of the community on this issue: on the one hand, they saw the inclusion of the Gentiles in the newly emerging Israel to which the primitive church saw God's eschatological promises addressed; on the other hand, the faith of these Gentiles was used as a judgment against Jewish faithlessness and rejection, and was a challenge addressed to the Jews.⁴⁶

By the time of the narrative's final setting in Luke-Acts, about 85 A.D., the matters of Gentile inclusion and Jewish rejection were no longer burning issues.⁴⁷ Gentile Christianity by this time held center-stage and was becoming part of the Hellenistic world in its own right, quite distinct from Judaism. The Gentile Christian who authored Luke-Acts was more concerned with integrating the history of Jesus and the early Church into the overall picture of God's salvation history than with rebuking Jewish impenitence or applauding and legitimizing Gentile faith; his is the broader concern of legitimizing Christianity by depicting it as the historical and divinely impelled outgrowth of the ancient Hebrew faith.⁴⁸ In this endeavor Luke appropriated the Q prophetic view of the Old Testament Deuteronomic history and the concern for John and Jesus as prophets and as the

46 P.D. Meyer, "The Gentile Mission in Q," Journal of Biblical Literature 89 (1970): 405, 407, 411, 417.

47 Perrin, The New Testament, 195.

48 W.G. Kummel, Introduction to the New Testament, tr. H.C. Kee, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 142.

fulfillment of prophecy and the continuation of the prophetic line. Luke writes a continuation of the biblical history in which a continuous series of promises and fulfillments connect the ancient history of Israel, especially its prophetic strand, to the story of Jesus and his witnesses, and which moves towards salvation for the Gentiles as its goal.⁴⁹ This view is reinforced by Luke's obvious dependence on the Septuagint as a linguistic and historical framework and by his connections of John and Jesus with Elijah and Elisha. In writing a polished literary work for a general Hellenistic reading public (including, no doubt, especially Jewish Christians and the "God-fearing" Gentiles of Hellenistic Judaism) Luke is concerned to portray in narrative the Christian affirmation that Christ was and should be "preached among the nations, believed on in the world" (1 Tim. 3:16), the Messiah who fulfilled Hebrew prophetic promises and yet, paradoxically, was rejected by Israel (cf. programmatic formulations in Luke 4). Dahl argues persuasively that this is the author's primary intent with Luke-Acts, while noting that other posited intentions (i.e., "delay of the parousia," "de-eschatologizing", "Early Catholicism" and the defense of Paul and the fall of Jerusalem) "contain elements of truth" but do not

49 Nils A. Dahl, Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 88, 95.

adequately explain Luke-Acts' overall intention.⁵⁰ But the tables are turned and the rejected Messiah is vindicated when Jerusalem is itself rejected in favor of Rome.⁵¹

In this context the narrative of the centurion's servant was viewed as one of the elements in Jesus' prophetic activity. Jesus' healing ministry fulfilled prophecy (Luke 4:16-21: cf. Isa. 61:1-3) and placed him squarely in the heritage of Hebrew prophets (Luke 4:24-30; cf. 2 Kings 5). In addition, the narrative was a dramatic demonstration that God's kingdom was dawning and was not confined to Judaism, a message of universal salvation for individuals and a world no less troubled and uncertain and divided than today.⁵²

Interpretation and

Homiletical Possibilities

Fuller provides a meaningful overview from which to begin the interpretation of the healing of the centurion's servant:

. . . Luke is more interested than the other evangelists in the miracles as facts of past history. They are part, and indeed the most important part, of Jesus' biography prior to his passion. Yet Luke is not uninterested in their meaning. They are characteristic of the central phase of the mighty acts of man's redemption. The Old Testament had prophesied them; they occur in Jesus; and the later church, from its own standpoint, looks back upon them, and draws lessons for the

50 Dahl, 92-97.

51 Dahl, 91.

52 Kee, Miracle, 202-206.

understanding of its own mission.⁵³

The function of this healing, as with all the healings of Luke-Acts, as part of the role-model and authorization for the Church's ministry cannot be overlooked. And it is clear from a reading of Luke's two-volume work that they were intended as such. Yet this healing, like the others in the Gospel, also displays typically Lucan themes, such as the universality of salvation, concern for the outsider, and the nature of Jesus' role as the messianic prophet sent by God.⁵⁴ Fuller notes in verses 8-9 of this pericope and the theme there of divine authorization "the beginning of Christological reflection."⁵⁵

In addition, the connection between sub-themes in this narrative and some of the sub-themes in the Naaman narrative seems evident. The concern with Gentile faith, with the power of prophetic authority, and with the nature of true covenant relationship are subtly expressed in this narrative as counterparts to the sub-themes noted in the Naaman narrative. As has been indicated by the discussion of the text's settings, the relationship of the issues inherent in these two narratives would not have been missed by either Luke or the Q community.

Any of these themes could provide homiletical entry to this text, as they could to the Naaman text. The most common treatment, perhaps, has been to focus on the nature of faith and its relation to humility

⁵³ Fuller, 87.

⁵⁴ Morris, 28-47, lists and discusses typically Lucan theological themes.

⁵⁵ Fuller, 48.

in approaching both texts.⁵⁶ But perhaps a more promising and less-examined avenue for homiletical approach might be the prophetic connection between the two texts which has been noted in this exegesis. It was noted that in the Naaman narratives one of the themes or aims was the reinforcing of the authority of the prophetic institution in a time of religious degeneration. In the centurion's servant narrative one of the aims for both Q and Luke seems to have been the reintroduction and redefinition of the role and authority of the prophet in light of Jesus after the loss of prophecy as a religious force in Israel. In both texts this theme is treated subtly, but especially in the Lucan narrative, where this issue rests on the centurion's affirmation of Jesus' authority and power as derived authority and power in verse 8. It is consistent with Luke's christological emphasis that the Holy Spirit is the operative authority in Jesus' healing work, and in fact in his entire messianic ministry within the context of salvation history. Few commentaries treat this subject; the ones that do mention it almost in passing.⁵⁷ This seems strange, since the faith of the centurion lauded by commentators has its basis in his recognition of the nature of Jesus' authority. Thus, as in the Naaman narrative, God (through the Holy Spirit for Luke) is the unseen mover, the One who prompts the centurion's faith in a prophet he has never met and who effects the

⁵⁶ For an example of this approach to the Lucan narrative, cf. J.H. Bailey, The Miracles of Jesus for Today, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), 42-52.

⁵⁷ G.B. Caird, Saint Luke (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 108.

healing of a slave absent from the healer. It is interesting that in both narratives the distance between prophet and patient reinforces the implication that it is God who does the healing, rather than some power inherent in the prophet. In Luke 7, Jesus does not even say a specific word of healing, but rather commends the centurion's recognition that Jesus' power to heal is derived power.⁵⁸ In this way the Lucan text delicately reinforces the biblical view that God alone heals, a notion which demands contemporary homiletical examination.

Another facet of this notion which deserves treatment in the pulpit is that the power of spiritual healing is derived power; spiritual healing of human ills by the power of God is not "faith-healing," where the power at work is human faith or mentality (as in "positive thinking," auto-suggestion or any of the imaging techniques often employed by some religionists or adherents to psychosomatic or holistic medicine) or some latent aspect of human personality. This distinction should be clearly understood and proclaimed from the Christian pulpit as contemporary society continues to explore the connection between mind and body. In this regard, stress should be laid on the place of encounter or relation with God in spiritual healing. A two- or three-sermon series involving the Naaman and centurion's servant narratives could compare how encounter with God in healing transformation leads to relation to God in faith (Naaman), and conversely, relation to God in faith that recognizes the true nature of divine authority and power leads to encounter with God

58 Morris, 44-46.

in healing transformation (the centurion). This runs counter to the often-expressed view that miracles do not produce faith, but faith produces miracles, which seems to ignore the encounter with God inherent in spiritual healing and overstate the place and power of human faith.⁵⁹

At least one theologian has observed that these issues of faith, authority and power, inherent in all the healings in the Bible and in the question of spiritual healing, boil down to a question of world-view:

What makes men unable to make sense of it (i.e., God's overarching authority and omnipotence as expressed in the New Testament) is not its inherent unintelligibility but its unacceptability. It undermines the power of Consciousness A (i.e. the contemporary world-view), and it has always done so. Such a threat to the dominant system of authorities can be repelled in various ways. It can always be branded as patent and blatant folly. Or its relevance can be limited to some restricted sectors of human existence, for example, to life within the Christian community. In any case, its claim to cosmological and ontological ultimacy must be rejected. Such a rejection proves relatively simple in an age where God is dead or so distant from the human scene as to be inactive in it, where the Church has become the guardian of established mores and the mirror of conventional world views. It was not so simple in first-century Israel, where the aliveness of God was not in question and where men assumed his power to determine all destinies. In that situation the claim that God's authority had been fully disclosed in Christ . . . became the rallying cry of a revolutionary counterculture which threatened every established institution. In that setting the structures of authority in Consciousness B (i.e. the world-view of the New Testament authors) were altogether too intelligible to be tolerated, except by those whose views of the world had been transformed by this silent revolution.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cf. Bailey, 14.

⁶⁰ Paul S. Minear, To Heal and to Reveal: The Prophetic Vocation according to Luke (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), 30; cf. also 3-16.

Contemporary pulpit-prophets are obliged to be aware of that revolutionary world-view, to allow themselves to be touched by it and come to grips with it, and to proclaim its liberating possibilities to people and a world crying out for its challenge, assurance, and healing encounter with the divine.

CHAPTER 6

Appropriating and Proclaiming

Biblical Reality

Conclusions from this study must begin where the Kellers end their study of miracles, by asking the question

How can this religious tradition belonging to the past . . . be taken into and absorbed into the present without contemporary life being restricted by it, yet so that the essential human experiences preserved in it are not lost? That is the leading and still unanswered question which runs through the criticism and interpretation of miracles in modern times.¹

Clearly the long-standing answer given by the Bultmann school, that all biblical miracles, including the healings, are irrelevant myths of the past which have no meaning or place in contemporary Christian faith, is inadequate in light of the indications in this study of the place and importance of Christian healing in the Church's inception and self-conception. Such an answer sidesteps the question, and would ultimately lead to a theological schizophrenia in modern biblical faith, divorcing reason from revelation, the past from the present, and redemption from the totality of human experience.² The end result would be a repetition of the terrible removal of God from human experience which characterized the theology of the Dark Ages. In spite of our technological and educational progress, the world at

1 E. Keller and M. Keller, Miracles in Dispute: A Continuing Debate, tr. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), cited in Borsch, xv.

2 See Melinsky, 111-115 for a concise repudiation of the Bultmann view.

times can still seem to many, as in the Dark Ages, a place of poverty, chaos, misfortune, ignorance and evil, or like the first-century Roman Empire, a place of tremendous change, upheaval and uncertainty, which cries out for some indication of divine presence, control and concern. Perhaps the contemporary revival of Christian healing is a natural response to that need, a response that offers physical as well as psychological and social regeneration as proof of the good and wise intentions of a loving Parent.

Broadly speaking, this Bultmannian view has been the dominant one of the twentieth century. But as in the Old Testament, where the dominant view of sickness as a just punishment from God for sin was counter-balanced by a secondary strand of tradition which protested illness as no part of the divine intention, so today a small strand of scholarship is moving away from Bultmann's demythologizing approach to the healing traditions in the Bible. Increasingly, contemporary scholars are just beginning to recognize and reaffirm the basic historical validity and relevance of the biblical healing materials, as this study indicates. J.L. Price, in his treatment of Luke-Acts, may be cited as a summary statement of this emerging position on healing:

There is no adequate grounds for rejecting as unhistorical such external manifestations of the Spirit as are noted in Acts Some students have discounted these miracle stories like Peter in Acts, Paul testifies in his letters that miracles of healing were wrought among his converts It seems reasonable, therefore, to conclude that Luke is here reporting early traditions Belief in miracles of healing was an inevitable accompaniment of the initial outbursts of Christian enthusiasm. Such miracles

happened again where they were expected.³

Some are just beginning to realize that the key to understanding and appropriating the biblical healings for our contemporary society is a matter of hermeneutical perspective rather than exegetical or scientific method, as G.K. Chesterton has suggested:

What a man can believe depends upon his philosophy, not upon the clock or the century. If a man believes in unalterable natural law, he cannot believe in any miracle in any age. If a man believes in a will behind law, he can believe in any miracle in any age.

Thus if we are honest and diligent in our efforts to understand, appropriate and proclaim the biblical message, we should allow that message to work on and in us, to affect the way we look at things. There should be a certain degree of culture shock as our modern world-view and preconceptions of reality make contact with the faith and world-view of the Bible.⁵ But the predominant contemporary approach to the Bible has been an endeavor to make it conform its message to the modern methodologies, presuppositions and world-view, dismissing as outmoded the ancient perspective on reality by linking it to the ancient cosmology, which is obviously unsatisfactory, and thus in a sense throwing out the baby with the bath-water. There

³ J.L. Price, Interpreting the New Testament, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), 132, 134, emphasis added.

⁴ G.K. Chesterton, Orothodoxy, (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 74-75.

⁵ Minear, 3-5.

seems in such an approach little objective endeavor to uncover, understand or appreciate the deeper faith-perspective of the Bible or to search for legitimate points of contact with contemporary faith and religious experience. In this way the faith-realities of the biblical healing material have by and large remained just beyond our comprehension, and have not been allowed, in the classroom or the pulpit or the living-room, to produce the radical impact on our perspectives of ourselves and our world of which they are capable. Either inadvertently or intentionally, while utilizing the resources of modern scholarship, we have accepted unexamined its implicit world-views (something we are no longer willing or able to do with regard to the Bible!), and Christian faith and practice have suffered in the process:⁶

Christian thinkers cannot consider experiences of healing today because of the tacit acceptance, philosophically and theologically, of a world view which allows no place for a breakthrough of "divine" power into the space-time world. Such a breakthrough as healing is simply considered an impossibility . . . If religious healing is to have a hearing, it will be necessary for Christians to take off these philosophical blinders and consider facts which our modern world view shuts out entirely.⁷

Walter Brueggemann refers to this openness to "an alternative perception of reality" as an integral element in a much-needed modern-day prophetic ministry, and notes that it involves "a

6 Minear, 7-8.

7 Kelsey, 307-308.

hermeneutic about the world" that must influence us in every context of our lives.⁸ As has been intimated at several points in this study, the remedy is not the wholesale abandonment of biblical criticism, or a naive return to the pre-scientific world-view of ancient times. But the results of this study do indicate a need for a serious re-thinking and possible re-directing of our approach to the Bible and to Christian ministry with the following points in view:

1. There is a continuing need to recognize and re-evaluate the historical value of biblical materials. Archeology has necessitated the rethinking of the once popularly held view that much of the biblical material is completely unreliable historically (the patriarchal narratives in Genesis are but one example of this shift in thought). As this study has indicated, the historical and faith validity of the biblical healings can no longer be unquestioningly disregarded. Thus to simply rationalize, allegorize, symbolize, or psychologize the Bible healings as a whole in our homiletic treatment of them does a grave injustice.

2. Again, speaking historically as well as theologically, it must be recognized that religious healing occupies a significant place in the life and ministry of the Christian Church. There is a need to re-examine that place and how it fits with our contemporary perspectives and expectations of the Church and its ministry to the

⁸ Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 110-111.

world and the total human experience. Christian healing must be evaluated on its biblical basis, its relation to the other functions of ministry (particularly preaching and pastoral care), and on its connection with the soteriological aims of the Church, and its legitimacy on those grounds recognized.

3. The relationship of healing and worship needs a new, long, hard examination. It is at this point that the soteriological connection between preaching and healing and worship needs further exploration. The potential for encounter and communion with God inherent in preaching and healing links them indissolubly with worship.⁹ And, as the historical decline of both healing and preaching within four hundred years after Jesus suggests, both preaching and healing (as well as other aspects of Christian worship) need to be rooted in the spirituality that is the lifeblood of any community's worship experience. Specific suggestions for incorporating a healing ministry into the worship and life of a church have been offered by others, but further thought needs to be given to the basis behind such efforts.

4. Finally, the biblical texts themselves call for homiletical treatments which tug at the philosophical and theological blinders that narrow the perspective of many Christians today, and which will help to expand the "horizon of meaning" derived from and brought to the texts.¹⁰ Both the healings examined in this study include an element of reversal of the normally expected perception of things, an indication perhaps that in our hermeneutical approach to the Bible the

⁹ J.H. Gilmore, Jr., "The Preaching Ministry and the Bible," Review and Expositor 57 (1960): 59.

¹⁰ D.A. Priebe, "The Unity of the Testaments," Word and World 3 (1983): 265.

modern, materialistic, mechanistic mind-set needs to be counter-balanced, if not stood on its ear, by the faith-perspective discernible in the biblical healing texts (cf. Rom 12:2). Indeed, such an undertaking may in the last analysis be the real task of a "text-centered hermeneutic" which avoids the hermeneutical temptation of subjectivism:

. . . the task of hermeneutics is to explicate the "world of the text" . . . The theological implications here are considerable: the first task of hermeneutics is not to proceed immediately to a decision on the part of the reader, but to allow the world or being which is the "issue" of the biblical text to unfold. Thus, above and beyond emotions, dispositions, belief, or non-belief, is the proposition of a world which in the biblical language is called a new world, . . . the Kingdom of God . . . must we not say that what is thus opened up in everyday reality is another reality, the reality of the possible? . . . This implies that the reader does not submit the meaning of the text to his own finite capacity of understanding, but that he lets himself be exposed to the text. . . ¹¹

With such an approach the healing traditions of the Bible can be intelligently absorbed into the present and their liberating message for the whole of human experience proclaimed from the pulpit, and practiced in Christian living. The sermons and liturgies which conclude this study provide examples of one way to begin to tackle the homiletical and hermeneutical opportunities suggested here for use of the biblical healing narratives. While in no way intended as

11 Paul Ricoeur, "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics," Studies in Religion 5 (1975): 25-27, 30.

definitive treatments of either these particular biblical narratives or of the topic of Christian healing, these sermons and their worship contexts, geared for the average Protestant congregation, should serve as indications of the possibilities for treating the Bible's healing message in a fair, responsible, meaningful and hopefully inspiring or thought-provoking manner. The sermons should be viewed as consecutive and related homiletical offerings set in a Sunday worship context.

Liturgy for Sermon 1

Prelude

Call to Worship - Psalm 103:1-4 (RSV)

Opening Hymn - "Come Ye Disconsolate, Where'er Ye Languish"
Thomas Moore/Thomas Hastings

Invocation - Almighty and ever-present Father, cause and creator of all that is good: we rejoice in Your presence as we join together to worship You in spirit and in truth. Enable us to be enriched by Your Word this morning, to feel the peace, joy and power You offer us in this hour. Fill us today with the mind and spirit of Christ, that we may become Your humble servants, and do our part to see your kingdom dawning in and through our lives. Amen.

Welcome and Announcements

Prayer Hymn - "Thou Whose Almighty Word Chaos and Darkness Heard"
John Marriott

Period of Prayer and Testimony - In this portion of the service there is opportunity for members of the congregation who have experienced healing and support by the power and presence of God in the past week to share their thanks, thoughts, and experiences (briefly). Time is also set aside for the congregation to raise prayer concerns, make requests for prayer and healing and to pray quietly together. The pastor's prayer, if one is deemed necessary, should speak generally to these types of concerns and be very brief. The emphasis should be on silent prayer and communion with God. The period closes with the congregation praying the Lord's Prayer aloud together.

Responsive Reading - Romans 12:1-12, 21 (NIV)
Leader: v. 1; Congregation: v.2; L: v.3; C: vv. 4,5; L: v.6;
C: v.7; L: v.8; C: vv. 9,10; L: v. 11; C: vv. 12,21

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-19

Sermon - "Healing: Recovery and Renewal"

(The sermon, particularly on as complex and controversial topic as Christian healing, must needs be instructional as well inspirational; it must challenge thought as well as comfort and open hearts to God's healing presence).

Offertory and Musical Offering (a vocal or instrumental solo or ensemble selection, intended to provide through harmony opportunity for praise, inspiration, contemplation and healing).

Closing Hymn - "He Stood of Old, the Holy Christ"
John Greenleaf Whittier

Benediction - 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24

Postlude

Sermon 1

TEXTS: 2 Kings 5: 1-19; Romans 12:1-3

TITLE: Healing: Recovery and Renewal

THRUST: Healing of body is concomitant with the healing and transformation of mind through divine influence and encounter.

Most of us, when we take our cars to a garage for repairs, simply tell the mechanic, "It's making funny noises," or "The brakes don't work," or "It needs a tune-up." And we expect that the mechanic will correct what's wrong. But we don't normally expect that the repairs will transform the nature of the car from an engineering standpoint, or change its character from, say, a four-cylinder family station wagon to a fuel-injected, turbo-charged, 0-60-in-6 seconds, street-eating sports car.

But fortunately, we humans are not like cars. We are more than just mechanical marvels, engineering achievements in flesh and bone instead of metal and plastic. We are in fact much more complex than even the most sophisticated, computer-monitored, top-of-the-line luxury engineering wonders on our roads today. The experiences we have do affect and transform us, sometimes in subtle ways of which we aren't immediately aware, and sometimes in very dramatic and obvious ways. Sometimes these transformations are physical, but more often they are mental, emotional or spiritual. And, as this narrative from 2 Kings illustrates, one of these experiences that can and should have a tremendous transforming effect on us is healing.

Now the Naaman in this account is a non-Israelite—a Gentile—but he is not a bad man, in spite of his skin disease. It was a common notion in Old Testament times that illness was a sign of sinfulness and was a form of divine punishment, but here Naaman's goodness and

worth are emphasized rather than his sinfulness. He is a responsible and respected man, a man of courage and compassion. He is proud of his country and his heritage, and loved not only by his superior, the king of Syria, but also by his subordinates, his servants—so much so that they call him "father" rather than simply "master" or "lord." And so much so that one of them—his wife's serving-girl—is concerned enough about his well-being to offer a possible solution to his sickness.

There is no question that Naaman was a wealthy man used to rubbing elbows with the movers and shakers and the power-people of his day. The narrative makes that clear. But evidently Naaman's sense of pride and self-importance had gotten out of hand. He makes quite an impressive entrance when he arrives at the house of Elisha the Israelite prophet with his horses and his chariots and his gifts of silver and gold and fine clothes. Now perhaps some of that splendor was to be payment for the prophet's services, but it was also intended to impress Elisha that Naaman was important, wealthy, and worth helping. Having his request for help come through royal channels would also no doubt reinforce the notion that Naaman deserved help and consideration.

So it's not too surprising that he's quite upset when Elisha isn't impressed enough with his importance to even come out and greet him personally with all due respect. And it's understandable that he's irked when Elisha doesn't make the big display over his healing efforts and call on God's name and invoke magic and use all the forces on Naaman's behalf that we normally considered part of a shaman's repertory in those days. Instead of all that, Elisha sends a mere messenger with instructions as to what Naaman must do to be healed. It's a bit like having the United States Secretary of Defense

show up at your door at dinner-time, and you send your seven-year-old son to the door with \$3.00 and directions to the nearest McDonald's! Naaman's response here makes it clear that his grand expectations were more in line with the superstitious practices of magic and exorcism which surrounded Israel than with the religious healing that was part of Israelite prophetic ministry.

Naaman wanted to be fixed; he wanted clean, healthy skin. He had come to Elisha like we would go to an auto mechanic or a barber. But Elisha, as a man of God imbued with spiritual vision, knew that in this case more was needed. What needed healing in Naaman's case was more than skin-deep. Evidently Naaman's leprosy was in some sense linked to the emotional and spiritual imbalance of his oversized sense of self-importance; perhaps the skin ailment was only the physical manifestation of this mental or emotional disorder. For notice in the narrative that Naaman's leprosy is healed once his pride is subdued. It's not the muddy water of the Jordan River that heals Naaman, nor even the intervention of Elisha; contrary to Naaman's expectations, Elisha does nothing to or for him, but simply instructs him by messenger to "wash, and be clean." Rather what heals Naaman is the divine influence he experiences through his newfound humility and obedience. Once Naaman's sense of pride and self-importance is put into proper perspective (with the help of his servants, interestingly enough; servants would obviously know well the value of obedience and humility!), there is room for him to be open to the presence and power of the God in Whom the Scriptures say we all "live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), and spiritual and physical transformation are the natural result.

Now this is not as mysterious or unusual as it might sound at first. Many profound thinkers, theologians and medical people are

today exploring the truth that has been part of the biblical perspective for centuries, that for a human being, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7a, KJV). Contemporary research has been underway which confirms the validity of this Scripture with regard to illness.¹² This is illustrated by the unfortunate fate of Elisha's servant Gehazi in the epilogue of this healing narrative, where his avarice and dishonesty ultimately result in disease. How we feel and what we experience physically are tied closely to how we think. Exploration in this century has opened up this whole area of the close relationship between mind and body, between what's going on in our thinking and emotions, and what we experience physically. The mechanistic, materialistic anthropology that has dominated human self-perceptions for centuries and would isolate or denigrate the influence of mental and spiritual factors in human experience, is no longer adequate or valid. Christian faith and practice are demonstrating the inferiority and inadequacy of such a limited materialistic model, even as in Elisha's day Israelite prophetic faith demonstrated the inferiority and inadequacy of the dominant manipulative and magical perceptions of religion and its purpose.

In Elisha's time a common conception of prayer and religious piety was that these could be employed, along with magic, to manipulate the gods or the spiritual forces at hand to work in your favor, or against your enemies. There is some evidence in the narrative about Naaman of

12 Cf. for example, Robert B. Reeves, Jr., "Healing and Salvation: Some Research and Its Implications", Union Seminary Quarterly Review (1968-69):24; and Judy Foreman, "Mood is found to affect immune system", Boston Globe, May 27, 1986.

the clash between this manipulative magical notion and the prophetic faith in the absolute power and purpose of God for good (2 Kings 5:10-12). And the account makes clear, in part through Elisha's apparent lack of involvement in the healing process, that Naaman's healing is not a matter of human manipulation but rather of divine self-manifestation. It is the power of God made present and real in human experience.

Even so, today some of us may think of religious healing as simply a matter of getting God to hear our prayers and fix us up so we feel better. We may focus our attention on the expected good result rather than on God Himself—we may give more weight to the subject of such prayers than to their object. Such an approach ignores the lesson inherent in the Naaman narrative—that restoration of bodily health is simply the natural concomitant of spiritual transformation, a transformation which occurs each time we encounter God and experience His presence. Indeed, if healing is at its best not simply a physical fix-up but is really wholeness, completeness, and all that the term salvation means to us in our Christian faith, then there can be no real healing without this spiritual transformation and regeneration which spur the physical restoration.

Notice that Naaman's conversion in the second scene of the story indicates that his healing was spiritual as well as physical. As in His practice with most of us, God did not leave Naaman as He found him. When God's presence touched Naaman's life, the long-term effect was not only a physical restoration but an accompanying spiritual regeneration. God doesn't settle for the status quo; transformation is His stock in trade! Naaman's abrupt expression of humility and obedience and desire to live consistently with his newfound faith were indicative of an internal experience of divine influence. His desire

to continue a life of faith upon his return to Syria suggests another important fact about Christian healing, namely that Christian healing is not simply a means for treating our illnesses and problems, but is part of a entire approach to living, characterized by faith, consistent effort to maintain and manifest our relationship to God, and an openness to spiritual change and regeneration as a result of that relationship. So, if we pray for healing that is only a matter of patching up a battered and beleaguered body (or a lop-sided life!), wanting deep down inside for God to leave the rest of us just the way it is, then we mistake the power and nature of prayer. If we draw close to God only when we're in trouble or when we want healing, then we mistake the power and nature of God, and have misunderstood what healing is all about.

Perhaps an experience of my father's will help to illustrate this view of healing as a spiritual and mental, as well as a physical experience. Early in his career as a naval officer, a military medical examination resulted in a diagnosis of tuberculosis. At the end of an extended stay in a naval hospital for tests and observation, he was deemed physically unfit for active service, placed on the Navy's temporary retired disability list and released from the hospital. As a devoted and practicing Christian, my father naturally turned to prayer in this circumstance. During this time, my dad says, persistent prayer and self-examination revealed much fear in his thoughts, and also resentment towards the Navy, both for forcing him out of his military career against his wishes, and for an unpleasant (and in my dad's view unfair) incident that had occurred a few months prior to his hospitalization. He realized that these unhealthy mental symptoms were part and parcel of what needed to be healed, and so in his relation to God endeavored to echo the words of the Psalmist:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). As he was able to overcome these unwholesome attitudes, through divine power and grace, he felt physically and mentally better than he had felt for some time.

Over the next five years, my dad held a variety of jobs in various parts of the country, and was required by Navy regulations to undergo periodic physical examinations at naval hospitals. At the end of the five-year period, in accordance with regulations, a final examination was given to determine whether he should be recalled to active military duty or given a permanent disability-retired status. In addition, he was required to furnish information concerning drugs and treatments used for the problem over the five-year period. He replied quite honestly that no drugs had been taken, and that prayer had been the sole therapeutic treatment employed during this time. Within a few days my dad was notified by the Navy Department that he was considered physically fit for full active duty, since there was now no evidence or symptom of tuberculosis, and there was no medication involved. At this point, my dad took up his Navy career where he had left off five years earlier, and went on to successfully complete a demanding military career of over 20 years. He has since retired, through the normal channels for those who complete their service careers, and now has a demanding second career in a large company. And the healing has been permanent—not a trace of the disease in over 20 years.¹³

¹³ This experience, which has been carefully corroborated, is recorded in full in my father's own words in The Christian Science Sentinel 66, no. 49 (Dec. 5, 1964): 2141.

Healing is a natural part of Christian faith and life, but it is not the motivation or goal of that faith. Rather, it is the natural by product of spiritual growth and transformation. Just as a boat produces a wake in getting across a lake, so Christian living—a life of prayer and the struggle to stay close to God—naturally results in healing as the side effect or by-product of spiritual motion—of regeneration and growth Godward. Isn't this what the life and ministry of Jesus teach us? Didn't Christ say, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10)? That quality of life is not just for some faraway heavenly future, but for us in the here and now. The prayer Jesus taught his followers acknowledges that God's will is done on earth, as well as in heaven. God is good, and His will for each of His beloved children is good; that will does not include sickness and spiritual stagnation, but rather healing and spiritual renewal. And as the lesson of Naaman's healing shows, physical healing and spiritual renewal are as inseparable as love and marriage ought to be; the old show tune says they go together and "you can't have one without the other."

Liturgy for Sermon 2

Prelude

Call to Worship - Psalm 34: 2,3,11,17,18,22(to:) (NIV)

Opening Hymn - "Let All the Earth with Songs Rejoice" 10th cent.
hymn, tr. Richard Mant.

Invocation - Almighty Father, our only Source of health and healing:
our thoughts turn to You with reverence, rejoicing, receptive
hearts and such a consciousness of Your indwelling presence that
nothing in all creation can blind us to Your love. Set our minds
on things above, on the goodness and grace and wholeness that are
part of Your kingdom, and make us ready to receive and empowered
to share these heavenly blessings as we worship, and in our daily
walk. Reveal in us today a measure of the fullness of Christ,
that we may walk in the way mapped out by the Great Physician.
Amen.

Welcome and Announcements

Prayer Hymn - "Not What I am, O Lord, But What Thou Art"
Horatius Bonar

Period of Prayer and Testimony

Responsive Reading - Psalm 121:1-8 (RSV)
Leader: v.1; Congregation: v.2; L:v.3; C:v.4; L:v.5;
C:v.6; L:v.7; C:v.8.

Scripture Reading - Luke 7:1-10; 9:1-2

Sermon - "Healing: Divine Grace, not Human Faith!"

Offertory and Musical Offering

Closing Hymn - "Only God Can Bring us Gladness"
Johann Olof Wallin

Benediction - 3 John: 2; Jude: 2

Postlude

Sermon 2

TEXTS: Luke 7:1-10; Luke 9:1-2

TITLE: Healing: divine grace, not human faith!

THRUST: God, not human faith, is the healing agent; the power and authority for Christian spiritual healing are God-derived and not a personal ability or gift.

Many people today seem to have a somewhat limited and stereotyped perception of what has come to be called Christian healing or spiritual healing. Many think of it as mostly a matter of faith—and even refer to it as "faith-healing," a term which seems to conjure up images of Elmer Gantry-type tent meetings and lots of shouting and gasping and dramatic displays, which can be attributed either to faith or to fraud, depending on your point of view.

And many preachers have looked at this very New Testament incident, the healing of the centurion's servant, as an illustration of how human faith has power to heal. They look at Jesus' commendation of the Roman centurion's great faith, especially in contrast to the skeptical reception of Jesus by many of his own people, and see there a justification for asserting that if only your faith is big enough, great things can happen. The typical homiletical treatment of this healing revolves around the centurion's faith rather than the healing itself, commending to us the centurion's example and asserting the long-held view that "miracles do not produce faith, but rather faith produces miracles."¹⁴

¹⁴ Bailey, 14.

In the first place, such an assertion and interpretation of this healing is inconsistent with other biblical examples. Remember the story of Naaman's encounter with divine healing power (2 Kings 5)? Then there are the healing accounts about Jesus and the man born blind (John 9), the nobleman's son (John 4), the healing conversion of Paul and the apparent effect of the apostolic healing work as recounted in Acts (cf. Acts 9). These accounts corroborate what many who have experienced Christian healing today already know—that such encounters with God's healing power can lead to an inauguration or rediscovery of a faith-relation to God. Healing can open the door to faith.

In the second place, this sort of approach to the healing of the centurion's servant—while it may indeed feed our faith—in point of fact entirely misses the main issue of this healing account. The focal point for this narrative is not the centurion's faith itself, but rather his perception of the source of Jesus' authority and power, a perception which was the foundation of his faith. The climax of the account is indeed in the profound interplay between the centurion's request, "say the word, and let my servant be healed," and Jesus' approval "not even in Israel have I found such faith." Luke records the healing of the servant simply and matter-of-factly in verse 10, almost as if this were the expected and natural outcome of this exchange. But the crux of the matter is really in the centurion's humble comparison between his authority as a soldier and Jesus' authority as a healer. As the KJV has it, the centurion says, "for I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say to one 'Go', and he goeth..." (emphasis added). At the heart of the centurion's faith then, which elicits Jesus' approval, is his recognition that Jesus has power over illness which is not personal but derived from God. As a military man, he understood that it was

because Jesus was under the authority of a superior that he could himself exercise authority and command obedience and control over the forces of illness and evil on behalf of and in the name of that superior. Perhaps this recognition, and not any desire for a display of humility, accounts for the centurion's reluctance to have Jesus enter his house: as a Gentile believer in the monotheistic faith of Israel, he sees the vast difference between the source of Jesus' authority and his own as a centurion.

It is the centurion's realization that Jesus' authority and power as a prophet-healer came directly from God and not from personal charisma or merit or faith that is the crucial element in the question of faith that the account raises. Apparently this is the stance Jesus himself took on his healing work; elsewhere Luke records that when the basis and authority for Jesus' healings came into question, Jesus himself replied, "if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20, emphasis added). And John has Jesus respond to another Jewish challenge of his healing work by saying that "the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise . . . I can do nothing on my own authority . . . the Father who dwells in me does his works" (John 5:19, 30; 14:10). Jesus apparently saw himself as a prophet sent by God, the messianic culmination of the Old Testament prophetic line. And he apparently saw his healing work as intimately linked with the prophetic message of salvation, peace and wholeness he proclaimed (cf. Luke 4:14-32; Matt. 4:17). And so Jesus relied on divine power alone to heal. And it was this divine power and authority which he commended to his followers in sending them out to preach and to heal (Luke 9:1-2; cf. also 10:1-9).

For us to understand, appreciate and experience Christian healing today, it is likewise important to recognize it for what it is, but also for what it is not. It is not merely a matter of faith, as is so commonly thought, if by this is meant that the healing power is perceived as deriving from a human agency or activity, as in some "mind-over-matter" or positive-thinking types of approaches, where the emphasis is on the human mind and emotions. Nor should Christian healing be confused with auto-suggestion, hypnosis or any of the imaging techniques employed in psychosomatic or holistic medicine, and even by some religious healers. Nor is Christian healing a matter of charismatic personality or some specialized psychic capacity. What all these various approaches have in common, and what separates them from truly Christian healing, is that it is the human mind or some related human capacity which occupies center stage, rather than the God Who is the creator and sustainer of all.

As we saw in considering the Old Testament account of Naaman's healing, it is true that the human mind and emotions affect the human physical experience. But therapeutic methods based on that realization alone, and which go no further than the human mind and body inter-relation, cannot adequately be considered Christian healing in the mode taught and practiced by Jesus and the primitive Christian Church. Such methods neglect or downplay the element of divine power and influence in the healing effort, and fail to fully recognize that, while the human mind does affect the human body, God is the healer of both mind and body, and that the transformation of the one and the restoration of the other through the influence of divine grace are indissolubly linked.

In both the accounts of Naaman and the centurion's servant, the healing takes place at a distance, which serves to reinforce the

conviction in both cases that the healing agency is not human, but wholly divine. The attitude displayed by the prophet in the one case and the Savior in the other, linked with the biblical understanding of the prophet as God's messenger (and Luke's christological view of Jesus as God's servant in the prophetic mold empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit), confirm this emphasis on the healing power as divine rather than personal. At one time the phrase "divine healing" was synonymous with Christian healing, and that puts the focus in the healing process where it rightly belongs. In Alcoholics Anonymous groups they talk about turning to a higher power outside yourself for help; this is the distinguishing feature of truly Christian or spiritual healing.

Christian healing as practiced by Jesus and the apostles, and as we should strive to experience and practice it today, is simply what Jesus said it was and showed it to be: the presence and power of God, the reign or kingdom of God if you prefer, felt in human experience. As we saw in the narrative of Naaman, the experience of God's presence never leaves us where it finds us, but touches every aspect of our existence, transforming and renewing us physically, mentally, spiritually, morally, emotionally, reaching us wherever our need is. God's healing presence is like a light switched on in a dark room—the light fills and brightens the entire room, not just certain parts of it. Jesus preached God's kingdom, His power and grace and goodness and loving government, "at hand"—available and capable of being experienced here and now (albeit by degrees and glimpses—but present and able to be experienced nonetheless). His healing works demonstrated the truth of his words in concrete, practical ways. And the reality he preached was not just for his day or for his immediate followers, but for us as well, as Luke's Gospel makes clear, giving us

in Jesus' ministry a role-model to emulate. If this were not so, then he would not and could not have shared with his disciples his God-derived authority and power to heal (cf. Luke 9:1-2 and 10:1-9). And we would have no experience of Christian healing by the power of God alone today.

But we do have that experience. My grandfather, a very senior citizen, suffered a stroke over a dozen years ago, when he was already past retirement age. This left him without the use of his faculties. An experienced Christian, devoted to the ministry of healing through the power of God, was contacted to pray with and for my grandfather, and arrangements were made for his care while he was incapacitated. During this period, my grandfather says, the 91st Psalm was a tremendous source of courage and comfort (verses 9-10): "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Holding to this biblical promise, and to his own God-derived authority and dominion and health as created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28), my grandfather says with the prayers of this experienced Christian and the loving support of his family he improved rapidly and steadily, so that within a remarkably short time he was completely free of the effects of the stroke. Today he is alert and active and involved in his local church, in travel, and in staying in touch with a growing number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There is not a trace of physical incapacity or limiting effect from the incident.¹⁵

¹⁵ This experience, which has also been carefully corroborated, is recorded in full in my grandfather's own words in The Christian Science Sentinel 77, no. 46 (Nov. 16, 1975): 2059.

Notice that the Bible passage so comforting to my grandfather in this healing emphasizes divine power over evil and disease. The healing he experienced was not the result of any mental, physical or psychological technique, nor were his prayers a matter of manipulating or begging God to do what he wanted or to act in a certain way on his behalf. It was rather the natural outcome of a trusting submission to the will and authority of God to be God and to govern lovingly every aspect of his life. Perhaps this is an area of our own faith-journey where we could all stand a bit more honest self-assessment. Do we really believe the biblical assertion that sin, sickness and death are inconsistent with the will of God, and that God has power over them? Do we really believe that we can have God-derived authority over them and a divinely ordained right to be progressively free of them, in keeping with Jesus' commission and intention for his followers in every age (John 14:12-15; Luke 9:1-2)? Do we really believe that this is part of the complete salvation which God's grace makes available and inevitable for us?

If we do honestly believe and strive to understand these things, then like the centurion, we must have the courage and faith and hope and love for God and for others to act on them. And we must have the meekness to recognize and place ourselves under the authority of the One in Whom St. Paul said we all "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Then, like the centurion, we too can expect to see healing as the natural, powerful and inevitable result.

Bibliography

Books

- Allen, Ronald J. Our Eyes Can be Opened: Preaching the Miracle Stories of the Synoptic Gospels Today. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982.
- Bailey, James H. The Miracles of Jesus for Today. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977.
- Barclay, William. And He Had Compassion. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1975.
- Barr, James. Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.
- Barrett, C.K. Biblical Problems and Biblical Preaching. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964.
- Barth, Karl. The Preaching of the Gospel. Tr. B.E. Hooke. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963.
- Beebe, H.K. The Old Testament. Belmont, CA.: Dickenson Publishing Company, 1970.
- Borsch, Frederick H. Power in Weakness: New Hearing for Gospel Stories of Healing and Discipleship. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Brueggemann, Walter. The Prophetic Imagination. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. Theology of the New Testament. Tr. Kendrick Grobel. Vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
- _____. The History of the Synoptic Tradition. Tr. J. Marsh. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963.
- Caird, G.B. Saint Luke. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.
- Capps, Donald. Pastoral Counseling and Preaching: A Quest for an Integrated Ministry. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980.
- Castle, Tony, ed. The New Book of Christian Quotations. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1982.

- Chappell, C.G. Sermons from the Miracles. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937.
- Chesterton, G.K. Orthodoxy. New York: Doubleday, 1969.
- Conzelmann, Hans. The Theology of St. Luke. Tr. G. Buswell. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960.
- Dahl, Nils A. Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976.
- Dawson, George C. Healing: Pagan and Christian. London: SPCK, 1935.
- Deal, H.R. The Kingdom of God Is Now. New York: Exposition Press, 1955.
- Dibelius, M. From Tradition to Gospel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.
- Dodd, C.H. The Apostolic Preaching and its Development. Chicago: Willett, Clark and Co., 1937.
- _____. The Parables of the Kingdom. rev. ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.
- Ellul, J. The Politics of God and the Politics of Man. Tr. G.W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972.
- Fitzmyer, J.A. The Gospel According to Luke I-IX. The Anchor Bible vol.28. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1981.
- Fohrer, G. Introduction to the Old Testament. Tr. D.E. Green. Nashville: Abingdon, 1968.
- _____. History of the Israelite Religion. Tr. D.E. Green. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972.
- Frazier, Claude A., ed. Faith Healing: Finger of God or Scientific Curiosity? Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1973.
- Fridrichson, Anton. The Problem of Miracles in Primitive Christianity. Trs. R.A. Harrisville and J.S. Hanson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.
- Frost, Evelyn. Christian Healing. London: A.R. Mowbray, 1940.
- Fuller, Reginald H. Interpreting the Miracles. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963.
- Gaster, Theodor H. Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969.
- Geldenhuis, N. A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1951.
- Gottschalk, Stephen. The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

- Gray, John. I and II Kings: A Commentary. 2nd ed. The Old Testament Library Series. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- Hiltner, Seward. Preface to Pastoral Theology. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958.
- Holland, DeWitte T. The Preaching Tradition: A Brief History. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980.
- Hull, J.M. Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition. London: SCM Press, 1974.
- Johnston, William. Silent Music. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
- Juel, D., J. Ackerman, and T. Warshaw. An Introduction to New Testament Literature. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978.
- Kaiser, O. Introduction to the Old Testament. Tr. J. Sturdy. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.
- Kallas, James. The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles. Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1961.
- Keck, L.E. The Bible in the Pulpit: The Renewal of Biblical Preaching. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978.
- Kee, Howard C. Jesus and God's New People. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959.
- _____. Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels. 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977.
- _____. Miracle in the Early Christian World. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Keil, C.F. The Book of the Kings. n.p.:n.p., 1950.
- Keller, E. and M. Keller. Miracles in Dispute: A Continuing Debate. Tr. Margaret Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.
- Kelsey, Morton T. Healing and Christianity. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973.
- Kennedy, George A. Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.
- Kummel, W.G. The Theology of the New Testament. Nashville: Abingdon, 1973.
- _____. Introduction to the New Testament. Tr. H.C. Kee. rev. ed. Nashville: Abingdon, 1975.
- Lapsley, James N. Salvation and Health: The Interlocking Processes of Life. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.
- Latourette, K.S. A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The First Five Centuries. Vol. I. New York: Harper and Brothers

Publishers, 1937.

Lindblom, J. Prophecy in Ancient Israel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973.

Marshall, I.H. The Gospel of Luke. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1978.

Martin, Bernard. The Healing Ministry of the Church. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960.

McCasland, S.V. "Religious Healing in First-Century Palestine." Environmental Factors in Christian History. Eds. J.T. McNeil, M. Spinka and H.R. Willoughby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

Melinsky, M.A.H. Healing Miracles. London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1968.

Miller, Donald G. Fire in Thy Mouth. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954.

Minear, Paul S. To Heal and to Reveal: The Prophetic Vocation According to Luke. New York: Seabury Press, 1976.

Montgomery, James A. The Book of Kings. The International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.

Morris, L. The Gospel According to St. Luke. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Company, 1974.

Moule, C.F.D., ed. Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History. London: A.R. Mowbray, 1965.

Peel, Robert. Christian Science: Its Encounter with American Culture. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958.

Perrin, Norman. Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

_____. The New Testament: An Introduction. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.

Plummer, A. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke. The International Critical Commentary. 4th ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.

Price, J.L. Interpreting the New Testament 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971.

Richardson, Alan. The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels. London: SCM Press, London, 1941.

_____. The Bible in the Age of Science. London: SCM Press, 1961.

Robinson, J. The Second Book of Kings. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

- Schaafs, Werner. Theology, Physics and Miracles. Tr. Richard L. Renfield. Washington, D.C.: Canon Press, 1973.
- Scott, R.B.Y. The Relevance of the Prophets. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
- Seybold, Klaus and Ulrich Mueller. Sickness and Healing. Tr. Douglas Stott. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- Sleeth, R.E. Proclaiming the Word. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964.
- Smith, M. Jesus the Magician. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978.
- Soggin, J.A. Introduction to the Old Testament. Tr. J. Bowden. The Old Testament Library Series. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.
- Stevenson, Dwight E. In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967.
- Teikmanis, Arthur L. Preaching and Pastoral Care. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964.
- Tillich, Paul. Systematic Theology. Vol. 3. n.p.: London, 1963.
- Trotter, F., ed. Jesus and the Historian. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968.
- van der Meer, F. Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church. Trs. B. Battershaw and G.R. Lamb. New York: Sheed and Ward Publishers, 1961.
- von Rad, Gerhard. God at Work in Israel. Tr. J.H. Marks. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.
- Weatherhead, Leslie D. Psychology, Religion and Healing. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951.
- Wilder, Amos N. The Language of the Gospel: Early Christian Rhetoric. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Wilkinson, John. Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice. Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1980.
- Wilson, R.R. Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Journals

- Achtmeier, Paul J. "The Lucan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch." Journal of Biblical Literature 94 (1975).

- Bostock, D.G. "Jesus as the New Elisha." The Expository Times 92. (November 1980).
- Brodie, T.L. "Jesus as the New Elisha: Cracking the Code." The Expository Times 93 (November 1981).
- _____. "Luke 7:36-50 as an Internalization of 2 Kings 4:1-37: A Study in Luke's Use of Rhetorical Imitation." Biblica 64. (1983).
- Brown, R.E. "Jesus and Elisha." Perspective 12 (Spring 1971).
- Case, Shirley J. "The Art of Healing in Early Christian Times." Journal of Religion 3 (May 1923).
- Cohn, Robert L. "Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V." Vestus Testamentum 33 (1983).
- Derrett, J.D.M. "Law in the New Testament: The Syro-Phoenician Woman and the Centurion of Capernaum." Novum Testamentum 15 (1973).
- Funk, R.W. "The Form of the New Testament Healing Miracle Story," Semeia 12, 1978.
- Gilmore, J.H. "The Preaching Ministry and the Bible," Review and Expositor 57, 1960.
- Hall, Thor "The Call to Salvation", Duke Divinity School Review 29 (1964).
- Hasel, Gerhard F. "Health and Healing in the Old Testament." Andrews University Seminary Studies 21 (1983).
- Jackson, E.N. "Mediating the Faith that Makes Whole." Southwestern Journal of Theology 5 (April 1963).
- Jacobson, A.D. "The Literary Unity of Q." Journal of Biblical Literature 101 (1982).
- Long, B.O. "The Social Setting for Prophetic Miracle Stories." Semeia 3 (1975). pages.
- Meyer, P.D. "The Gentile Mission in Q." Journal of Biblical Literature 89 (1970).
- Miller, J.M. "The Elisha Cycle and the Accounts of the Omride Wars." Journal of Biblical Literature 85 (1966).
- Mowley, H. "Health and Salvation in the Old Testament." The Baptist Quarterly 22-23 (July 1967).
- Northcutt, Jesse J. "How to Prepare a Biblical Sermon." Southwestern Journal of Theology 2 (April 1960).
- Parker, Pierson. "Early Christianity as a Religion of Healing." St. Luke's Journal of Theology 19 (1976).

Priebe, D.A. "The Unity of the Testaments." Word and World 3 (1983).

Reeves, Robert B. Jr. "Healing and Salvation: Some Research and Its Implications." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 24 (1968-69).

Ricoeur, Paul. "Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics." Studies in Religion 5 (1975).

Robins, H.C. "Spiritual Healing in the History of the Church." The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, July 1956.

Tillich, Paul. "Heal the Sick; Cast out Demons." Union Seminary Quarterly Review 11 (November 1955).

Westermann, D.C. "Salvation and Healing in the Community: The Old Testament Understanding." International Review of Mission 61 (January 1972).

Wilkinson, John. "A Study of Healing in the Gospel According to John." Scottish Journal of Theology 20 (1967).

Wire, A.C. "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and their Tellers." Semeia 11 (1978).

Newspapers

Foreman, Judy. "Mood is found to affect immune system." Boston Globe, 27 May 1986.

Gottschalk, Stephen. "Christian Healing: The Christian Science View." The Christian Science Monitor, 19 March 1979, 17.

Saikowski, Charlotte, and Richard Harley. "Christian Healing", The Christian Science Monitor 13-16 March 1979, series of reports.

"Pope Says Labor Takes Priority Over Capital." San Diego Union, 30 January 1985, sec. A:2.

Reference Works

Chrysologus, "Sermon 36." The Fathers of the Church. Vol. 17. Tr. George E. Gansse, New York. Fathers of the Church, 1953.

Fant, C.E. and W.M. Pinson, eds. 20 Centuries of Great Preaching. Vol. 1. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971.

Pellet, D.C. "Capernaum". The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Ed. G.A. Buttrick. Vol. 1. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Roberts, A. and J. Donaldson, eds. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volumes 1-4, 6-7. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

Schaff, P., ed. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Vol. 9 Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956.

Unpublished Paper

Rhoades, Dan. "A Theological Basis for the Church Delivering Health Services in the Present American Society." Unpublished paper, School of Theology, Claremont, CA, n.d.